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No. 45

Starboard Jack.



"Whoop-la!" cried Jack. "Whoop-la!--get up!--easy!--whoa, now!--Zachariah--don't be skittish. Whoop-la!"

Starboard Jack;

OR, THE

NIMBLE REEFER OF THE SCHOOLSHIP MERCURY.

By ORRIN GOBLE.

CHAPTER I.

"WHOO-PA, here we are!" A queer introduction of a quaint character. "I want to see the captain of this 'ere washtub."

"Ship a-hoy!"

It was as dark as pitch, and the lookout on board the schoolship *Mercury* started, as the night was rent by this cry, and bending forward he strained his eyes in the direction from whence the cry had come.

"Ship a-hoy!" again rang out the cry, clear and loud.

The lookout straightened up, rubbed his eyes to assure himself that he was not asleep, then peered in the direction from whence he at each moment expected a ship to heave in sight.

"Ship a-hoy, gol dern yer!" sung out the same voice, apparently nearer than before.

"On the lookout," cried the officer in charge of the deck.

"Aye—aye, sir," responded the lookout.

"Wasn't there a cry just now of ship a-hoy?"

"Aye—aye, sir."

"Where away?" asked the officer.

"I'll be hanged if I can tell. From leeward, I think. Come this way, sir."

The officer advanced and had just reached the look-out's side, when the cry came:

"Ship a-hoy! Just as lief as not run a fellow down, wouldn't ye. Port your helm, hard down!"

The cry was close by, and the officer, fearful of a collision, brought his night-glass to bear leeward, but could see nothing of any approaching vessel. Scarce trusting his own senses, he however answered the last hail by replying:

"Ship a-hoy, it is. Who are you? Where bound?"

"Bound to the devil, perhaps. Sloop *Salvation*, no port, Captain Starboard," came a voice still nearer.

"Where away?" sang out the officer.

"Here away," replied the other, and then all was silence, although the officer called repeatedly.

He was in a quandary, knowing not what to do, when he heard the voice say, almost at his elbow:

"A queer lot of duffers you are on board this craft, anyhow."

He glanced quickly in the direction of the voice, and by the sickly gleams of the light hung in the fore-rigging, saw a head and shoulders appearing above the gunwales.

He was not superstitious, but was nevertheless somewhat startled by the event, and kept his eyes fastened on the figure, which finally stood erect.

The next instant the intruder turned a somersault, and landed exactly in front of the scared lookout, and cried out:

"Whoop-la, here we are! as the clown in the Thirteenth street circus used to say when he tumbled off his horse and landed a-straddle of as great a donkey as himself. As I said before, here we are, eh?" and to emphasize it he punched the lookout so violently in the stomach that he doubled up like a jackknife, involuntarily assuming a sitting position on the deck.

With a quick, energetic jump he stood before the officer, who had been curiously watching the course of events.

"How you was, eh?" demanded the new-comer, seizing the officer's hand before he was aware of it, and shaking it heartily. "I was never so glad to see a person before. Who are you?"

"I—I"—stuttered the officer, startled by the strange

manner of the speaker and the abruptness of his question—"I—I—am—Scott, the second lieutenant."

"Sho! be that so? Well, Lieutenant Scott, I'm right glad to meet you. What vessel be this?"

"The *Mercury*."

"School-ship?"

"Yes."

"I busted me breeches,
Goin' over the ditches,
For you—"

I say," said he, suddenly stopping in the middle of the song he had begun singing. "I say, mayhap then as how you've got such a chap aboard this craft as Patsy Hogan?"

"We have, but do you know him?" asked Scott.

"Do I know him? Jerusalem! I should say so. Know Patsy Hogan? As well as a soft-shell clam knows when it's high water. Know him? Well, you bet I do. Why, him and me've had just bang-up times together afore now. His daddy—he was a good cuss, too—went out sailing—windy day—boat upset—old Hogan swallowed too much water—consequence—a widow with eleven children—Patsy counting one. Last I heard of the cub was that he had j'ined the *Mercury*. Whoop, hurrah! but ain't this jolly?" and he pivoted lightly on his heel and whirled rapidly around.

"Now, who are you?" asked Scott.

"Me? Who am I? Captain Starboard Jack, at your service."

"Of what vessel?" asked Scott, smiling.

"Sloop *Salvation*."

"What port?"

"No port."

"Then where in the devil did you come from?"

"I never was in the devil," replied Jack, as the person called himself. "So I can't come from him."

"If you were never in the devil, I'll take an oath he's in you," said Scott, a little piqued at Jack's apparent evasion.

"It wouldn't be a false oath, I'm a-thinking," replied Jack, "and ye'll find it out, too, before ye've known me long, and if you don't, then Starboard Jack's gone intirely back on the character people give him."

"Well—well, no more of that. How came you on board this vessel?"

"As any other body under the same circumstances would do," replied Jack, artfully evading what Scott had thought to be too direct a question for evasion.

"Hang it!" said Scott, testily, "you are either a knave or a fool, or both."

"Both, if it please you," replied Jack, coolly. "But now, lieutenant, can I see the captain?"

"No," curtly answered Scott.

"I must see him. I tell you I want to see the captain of this 'ere washtub."

"Want an be hanged, then," said the now incensed officer, and turning to the rest of the watch, who, hearing the altercation, had been drawn to the spot, he angrily said:

"Just take care of this fellow until we can find out something concerning him."

"Kape off!" cried Jack, as the watch advanced to seize him. "Kape off, I say. Do you hear that? I'm a-spittin' on my hands, so mind your eyes, you bla'guards."

"Advance and seize him," cried Scott, seeing his men hang back. "Advance—go on—are you all blockheads?"

They came forward, but as they would have laid hands on him, he sent one straight from the shoulder and floored the person who received the blow. This was done with the right hand, which was speedily followed up by a counterpart with the left.

"Whoop! Hurrah! Lie there, my bowld boy," as he sent another to grass. "That's some science for you. Whoop! how's that, my hearty. Starboard Jack forever—hurrah!" and he sprang through the breach he had formed and waltzed up the deck.

"After him," cried Scott, in vexed tones, and himself led the chase.

But Jack was not going to be captured so easily.

Jumping in the main shrouds, he ran up them as lightly as a cat.

But he was closely pursued, so when he had gained the top and stopped, he was obliged to shin it up the stay.

A few minutes later he was sitting in the cross-trees, nonchalantly singing "Muldoon, the Solid Man."

By Scott's order, a man was stationed in the maintop to prevent Jack's leaving his airy perch without being captured.

"I say, you up there!" called out the person stationed on guard, "make less noise."

"Go to blazes, you cheesy-mouthed son of a cross-eyed cow-driver, and keep your chin to yourself. I want none of it," replied Jack, promptly.

"You—you"—fairly screamed the incensed sentinel, "I'll—I'll"—

"What?" interrupted Jack.

"Make you sweat for that when I catch you," replied the sentry.

"Come and do it now," said Jack, "why don't you?"

"I don't want to," was the reply.

"You daresn't," retorted Jack.

"I'll have the satisfaction, anyhow, of keeping you up there till morning," responded the other, grimly, drawing what satisfaction and consolation he could from that fact.

"I'm willin'," replied Jack. "If I wasn't, I wouldn't stay here. It's a nice, comfortable place up here, and I guess I'll take a snooze. Wake me up about daylight, will you?"

To this there was no reply, and Jack really stretched himself out as best he could, and hugging tight to the spar to prevent falling off, by the vessel's rolling, he dropped asleep.

He slept soundly until long after daylight, and was finally awakened by a pull at his leg. Glancing in that direction he saw a head and shoulders just coming in sight.

On looking deckward, he saw a group standing on the poop with upturned eyes, watching for what would transpire.

The captain had been informed of the queer circumstance of his coming on board, and his subsequent actions, and, naturally, was all curiosity to see Jack.

Starboard quickly arose to his feet, and stepping on the foot rope, made his way out on the yard-arm, arrived at the end of which he paused and coolly surveyed his pursuer, who, after some hesitation, followed him.

"Bully for you—you've got grit," said Jack, as the person came closer. "But if you care for your health, keep your distance."

The fellow paused, intimidated by the covert threat.

"Go on," yelled Scott, from below, who was yet nursing his wrath against Jack, and who quickly noticed the pause.

"Shut up, big nose!" yelled Jack, the unusual prominence of Scott's nasal organ having attracted his attention. "Here's for your smeller," and he took from his pocket a missile; an instant later there was a yell of pain from Scott, attended by a clasp of his nose, that testified to the nicety of Jack's aim.

Jack pursuer was now almost beside him.

Seizing hold of the yard-stays, Jack swung himself clear of the yard-arm, and went rapidly deckward, hand over hand.

Scott rushed forward and would have taken hold of him, but Jack suddenly dropped on his knees, sprang forward on all fours between the legs of Scott, upsetting him, much to the detriment of the aforementioned organ.

"Whoop-la! Here we are again!" said Jack, turning an air-spring. "Captain, I'm very glad to see you and have the pleasure of exchanging compliments," and as he finished he held out his hand.

"Cool!" ejaculated the captain.

"As a cucumber," replied Jack.

"You're impudent," said the captain.

"As a beggar," quoth Jack.

"Where did you come from last night?" asked the captain.

"From a raft," replied Jack, more seriously than he had hitherto spoken.

"A raft? How so?"

"On board the *Petrel*—storm last week—wrecked—made raft—floated around—saw light—hailed you—nearly run down—wave lifted me—caught forechains—climbed up—had a row with long nose—slept on the cross-trees all night—rested well—you know the rest," answered Jack, laconically.

CHAPTER II.

A LOOK AT THE PAST—HUSBAND, WIFE AND CHILD—THE "STAR"—BROKEN IN TWAIN—THE FINDING OF THE CHILD—ADOPTED—STARBOARD JACK SHIPS ON THE "PETREL," WHICH FOUNDERS—THE "MERCURY."

It would be better, perhaps, before going further, to give a short history of Starboard Jack's earlier life, as well as to explain the circumstances connected with his being adrift on a raft in the very middle of the great Atlantic.

Seventeen years before the opening of our story, one dark, tempestuous night in November, the wreckers at Barnegat were startled from their slumbers by the booming of canons, which conveyed to them the terrible story of a ship, that, powerless to avert it, was rapidly approaching its doom on those treacherous shores.

Hastily donning their clothing, they hurried to the shore.

In the offing was the ship, which they located by the blue lights they burned on board.

"God help them," said Harry Jennings, Captain Harry, as others called him, "for no boat can live in such a storm. She is driving this way very fast."

"Aye, she is that," returned his companion, a weather-beaten old tar, who, having been captivated by a pretty face, had given up the sea, and settled down on the shores of Barnegat.

"Poor fellows! Hear the guns," said Captain Harry, in a sorrowful tone, each reverberation sounding to his ears as the death-knell of some brave soul on board the ill-fated vessel.

At this juncture one of the wreckers approached and asked if they should launch the life-boat.

"'Twould be folly. Even our stanch life-boat could not live in the terrible storm," replied Captain Harry, and he would not have spoken thus did not his own good sense and long familiarity with the sea teach him that to have launched the boat would be but to send to a watery grave those brave souls, who are always ready and willing to risk their lives for humanity's sake.

"So I thought, cap'en," returned the other, "but the boys said as how we oughter leave it to you."

"Don't go, then, it would be useless. God knows I say it with an aching heart, and you all know that Harry Jennings is not the man to shrink from danger when there's the least chance of success," replied Captain Harry, as if the bravery and courage which he had more than once exhibited needed vindication now.

"We knows that, cap'en," and turning, the questioner returned to the little group of men who stood a few hundred feet distant, waiting for Captain Harry's verdict, which was received by the majority with approval.

There were, however, some few venturesome spirits who were dissatisfied, and had any man of them openly declared himself as willing to take charge of the expedition, the life-boat would have been launched in an instant.

Meanwhile the doomed vessel came closer.

As the blue lights flashed, she was so near that forms could be seen clinging to the shrouds and rigging.

And now the men on shore could hear, above the tumult of the storm, wild shrieks and cries, and with heavy hearts and bated breath, tremblingly stood waiting for the shock.

And on board the vessel.

Long since had the attempt to save the vessel been given up, and the captain had bade all take care of themselves. Despair was written in the faces of all. Each one was provided with something as a life-preserver, and to these the poor creatures clung, realizing that this would soon be all that would stand between them and death.

Some of the scenes were heart-rending. Husbands and wives taking solemn leave of each other, knowing full well that this would be their last meeting on earth.

But to one scene in particular we would call the reader's attention.

It is that of a little group, consisting of a young and handsome couple, husband and wife, and their babe of a year old.

"Husband, I pray God may spare our little Harold, who sleeps so quietly in my arms, unconscious of our peril," said the heart-broken mother, in a broken voice.

"Sh! dear wife, grieve not—cheer up—we will hope for the best. Does that preserver still remain properly adjusted?"

"Yes—but oh, my baby," wailed the mother, maternal solicitude for her offspring overshadowing all else.

"Wife, I'll fasten this board about our boy, and then fasten him to you," said the husband, after picking up a piece of board that had lain beneath his feet.

The baby was fastened on, and the husband was about to attach it to his wife, when, with a giant leap and a sudden descent, the vessel had struck. A quiver convulsed her from stem to stern, and as wild, terror-stricken, soul-curdling shrieks filled the air, there was a snapping, crackling sound, and she was rent in twain.

And the husband, wife, and child?

Ask the waves.

"There, she's struck. Heaven help them in this hour of need," muttered Harry Jennings, and then said aloud, so that all could hear his voice:

"Keep a bright watch, boys, and do all for these unfortunates that you can. To the edge of the surf—away."

"Aye—aye," came from them as one voice, and away they dashed.

But few of those on board the wrecked vessel, whose name transpired to be the *Star*, reached the shore alive.

Out of more than a hundred souls but a bare half dozen were left, and among these was a little light-haired, blue-eyed boy-baby, firmly lashed to a board on which the word *Star* was painted, it having been the stern-board of the jolly boat.

"Crackey, but here's a foind," said one of the wreckers, whose voice clearly betrayed his Irish descent, as, after stumbling across the little bundle of what had first appeared to be but a wet mass of rags, he picked it up, and discovered what was enclosed.

"What have you found, Mike?" asked a companion.

"A baby," replied Mike.

"A baby?" queried the other, in wondering tones.

"Yis."

"Alive or dead?"

"The latter, I'm a-thinkin'. Howld, be me sowl, but I think it's alive it is," returned Mike, the change of opinion being wrought by his hand coming into contact with the infant's body. "Arrah, but it is," continued Mike, in jubilant tones, as he detected the faint beat of the little heart.

"But, Mike, what are you going to do with it?" queried his companion, Billy Spud.

"Phat am I going to do wid it?" Is that phat ye're axin' me?"

"Yes; what are you going to do with it?"

"Take it home to be sure, phat ilse? Kate and mesilf has wone of our own, through the will of God, an' right

gladly will we take this wee bit childer and gi' it shelter while there is a roof above us," said Mike, earnestly and sincerely.

"Well said, Mike, well said!" replied Billy Spud, placing his hand familiarly on his shoulder, and using a commendatory but at the same time regretful tone, as he continued:

"If you had not said as you do, I would have taken it myself, and I envy you the finding of it. But, Mike, the poor little thing must be almost frozen to death in this cold. Take it home, man, take it home."

"I'll do the same right away," and clasping the child in his arms, Mike hurried home and laid it in the arms of the overjoyed and delighted Kate.

"Katie, darlint," asked Mike the next day, "be it a boy?"

"Yis."

A boy had been Mike's ambition, and so elated was he with this news that he almost hugged to death his buxom, rosy-cheeked wife.

The question arose as to what they should call the child, and he was finally christened John Mulligan. The story, however, of his being saved by being attached to a board with the word *Star* on it, obtained for him the appellation of Starboard; and rather fancying the name as he grew up, he encouraged the use of it, finally becoming to be known by no other.

Mike Mulligan and Katie, his wife, did all they could for the boy as he grew up, lavishing on him all the love their natures possessed, and by striving hard, they managed to give him a good common-school education, although his propensity for mischief was so great as to almost make it impossible to keep him quiet long enough to explain any thing to him. But he made up for lack of close application by an intuitive and quick-witted mind.

His foster father obtained a situation for him in a grocery store in a neighboring town, but his wild freaks were his bane, and the grocer at last returned him, saying that he was perfectly incorrigible.

Then he entered a drug store as errand-boy, but his mischievousness soon developed itself, and so successfully that almost everybody in the store was sent on one or more foolish errands before it was discovered that there was a practical joker in their midst. For chemistry he conceived a liking, and took every means of learning the nature of various chemical substances, their action when brought into contact with each other, and their effects.

No sooner had he gained a smattering of their properties than he began to use it to good effect, one day cleverly administering to some one a jalap, another *vice versa*.

He was compelled soon to leave this place, but not before he had learned a great deal concerning druggists' sundries.

What to do with the boy was a vexed question between Mike and Katie.

Jack had always had a desire for the life of a seaman, and it was finally decided that he should be allowed to go on a short trip, as a means of testing his love for a sea-faring life.

He came back, not as they expected, disgusted with it, but more enthusiastic than ever.

A longer trip was decided on.

When he returned and hastened to the little cottage he had known as home, he found it occupied by strangers.

From them he learned the story of a ravaging fever, that among others, had carried away the only two persons on earth to whom he considered himself bound.

Restrained no longer, he signed articles for a voyage to Africa, and it was some two weeks later that the *Petrel*, the vessel on which he had shipped, foundered in a heavy gale, giving them barely time to construct a heavy, lumbering raft, which the elements no sooner seized than it tore to pieces.

The portion of it which Jack happened to be on when it divided, contained the sea-biscuit and water, which had been securely fastened on, and it was to this fact that he

owed his life, for he was doomed to drift around for almost two weeks.

He at first had two companions, but they were carried away by the waves to meet their death.

Jack, being one of those restless, ever-active persons, set to work as soon as the storm subsided and rigged a sort of mast, on which he spread an old coat for a sail.

He then facetiously called his raft a sloop, and dubbed her the *Salvation*.

For two weeks he tossed helplessly about on the face of the deep, never despondent, always hoping for the best.

Late one afternoon he, as was his custom to do at least forty times a day, closely scanned the horizon.

He gave a sudden start, and excitedly exclaimed:

"A vessel—never say die—Starboard Jack will live to tell his grand-children yet—how he navigated around for a couple of weeks on a raft—hurrah, Jack, my brave boy, congratulate yourself. I do. But"—a sudden thought rushed across his mind, "will she come this way?"

He anxiously watched the vessel until night's sable curtain hid her from view.

Of one thing he was satisfied, that was, that he lay directly in the vessel's course, and so allowed himself to hope that, even though it was night, he might be rescued from his perilous position.

At last the light of the vessel in the fore-rigging attracted his attention.

He nervously watched it as it slowly approached, and when it came near enough, he inflated his lungs and gave the cry of "Ship a-hoy!" that so startled the lookout of the *Mercury*.

There being no answer, he repeated it.

Again receiving no reply, he gave the hail again; and then, as the vessel bounded rapidly toward him, Jack replied to the questions Scott had asked him.

The *Mercury* was hard on, and Jack began to be afraid that he was too close to her course, and had called to them to port the helm. This was not done, however.

Jack, foreseeing that his raft was doomed to destruction, stood up, grasping the improvised mast for the purpose of steadying himself.

Nearer and nearer the vessel came.

Jack gathered himself for one superhuman leap, and as the raft sank beneath her bow, aided by a high wave, he reached the fore-chains of the *Mercury*.

He climbed up them, and as he shoved his head above the gunwale, he said:

"A queer lot of duffers you are on board this craft, anyhow!"

CHAPTER III.

JACK AND PATSY—A ROW WITH A BULLY—JACK CONVINCES HIM THAT HE IS NOT "COCK OF THE WALK"—FINDS A COMPANION-FRIT IN GEORGE LONG—A PRACTICAL JOKE.

AFTER Jack's laconic description of how he came on board, the captain asked:

"Now that you're on board, what do you propose doing?"

"Staying."

"Indeed," said Captain Stafford, a little disconcerted at the short and prompt reply. "In what capacity?"

"That rests with you, sir," replied Jack.

"Well—well; I suppose you're hungry, so you can go to the mess-room and get something to eat, after which you can come to my cabin," said the captain.

"Aye—aye," replied Jack, touching his cap and turning away.

The face that showed in the cook's caboose was recognized by Jack, and advancing, he called out:

"I say, Patsy."

An Irish lad, the cook's helper, and mess-room boy,

glanced up at this hail and scrutinized Jack's features closely.

"Patsy, don't you know me?" asked Jack.

"Starboard Jack, be all that's holy!" gasped Patsy in surprise. "How in the devil came you here?"

"I'll tell you another time," replied Jack. "But, Patsy, give me something to eat; I'm awful hungry."

"You'll have to go to the mess-room, Jack; its agin the orders to give out grub here," replied Patsy.

After satisfying his hunger, he visited the captain, and after some talk was duly enrolled as a student, subject to the same rules that governed the others, and enjoying the same privileges.

The next morning at four o'clock, the cry rang out:

"Eight bells—starboard watch ahoy—pull up lively there below."

Jack had been placed in that watch, and in company with his mates, hurriedly scrambled deckwards.

Then eight struck again, the starboard gave up their place to the larboard watch, and descended to the mess-room.

"Hurry up, you there, Patsy," gruffly said an individual sitting at the same table with Jack, addressing Patsy Hogan, who was already exerting himself to the utmost to satisfy the clamoring of the hungry students.

"I am hurryin'," replied Patsy, glancing fearfully, as if expecting a kick or a cuff, at the large, rawboned person who had thus gruffly addressed him, and whose name Jack afterwards learned was Sam Brewster.

"You lie, you're not," angrily and curtly said Sam.

"I am," retorted the little Irish lad, unable to bear this imputation as to his veracity.

"Talk back to me, will you?" cried Sam, springing to his feet. "I'll teach you better than that," and drawing back his hand he struck Patsy—whose arms were loaded and so could not ward off the blow—a heavy stroke on the side of his head that stretched him out on the floor and sent the dishes rolling about, while their contents lay in little patches here and there.

"You inhuman brute!" sprung from Jack's lips before he was aware of it, the sight causing his blood to boil with indignation.

"What's that you're saying?" demanded Sam, turning abruptly around and facing our hero. "Were you speaking?"

"Yes," replied Jack, firmly bending his eye fearlessly on that of Sam.

Something in Jack's looks disconcerted Sam, and he attempted to retreat from the aggressive position he had assumed, by saying:

"Perhaps I misunderstood what you said?"

"Perhaps you did," said Jack.

"What was it?"

"I repeat it—you are an inhuman brute," and as Sam doubled up his fists, Jack arose to his feet, his hands hanging loosely by his sides, but held in readiness for execution.

"See here, my little baby," said Sam, ironically, "perhaps you don't know that I run this ranche, that I am the cock of the walk!"

"You may be what you please, but you can't crow over me, understand that!" replied Jack, in a prompt, decided manner, while from the other students in the mess-room, who had gathered around, could be heard commendations of the spunky little fellow who so bravely bearded the lion in his den. "Look at that boy," continued he, pointing at Patsy, who had picked himself up, and now stood in one corner, an interested spectator in the proceedings, while in his heart he was calling down Heaven's blessings on the head of him who was standing up so nobly in his defense, and curses of the bitterest nature on him who had ever been particularly tyrannical toward him. "Look at that poor boy, in nowise your equal, whom you so brutally struck. Shame—shame, on your brutality!"

During this time Sam had been working himself into a passion, and in a thick and angry voice, cried:

"I'll teach you to talk in that way to me, you—you—I'll pummel the life out of you."

"You have my consent to try it," said Jack, in a bitter, sarcastic manner.

"I have, have I? But first of all, I will give you one, you grinning devil," and he sprang forward and again struck Patsey.

"Shame!"

"Shame!"

The cry issued from more than one pair of lips at this brutal exhibition.

Jack waited for no more. The mess-table had hitherto been between Sam and himself, but to the nimble lad this was no impediment, and with one bound he cleared it. With another he reached Sam's side, and grasping him by the shoulder as he would have again struck the cowering boy, hurled him to the other side of the room.

With a ferocious, almost fiendish cry, the bully sprang toward Jack; but the latter had prepared himself for the onset, and when Sam would have closed in on him, sprang nimbly aside and gave the bully a tilting blow under the chin.

A ripple of approving remarks ran through the crowd of spectators, and perhaps every heart there was inwardly wishing that the bully, who had reigned so long over them with almost autocratic firmness, had at last found his superior. While they hoped, they still doubted, for, in their minds, most of them could run over the numbers who had essayed to perform the feat, and who had been ignominiously vanquished.

The bully hesitated in astonishment, and with blinking eyes surveyed his antagonist from head to foot.

Was he to be thrashed and dethroned from his position by that mere stripling of a boy? Never.

He advanced, but this time more cautiously, as he instinctively felt that his task would be no easy one.

He prided himself on his skill in sparring, and determined to "cook Jack's goose" in regular P. R. style.

He resorts first to the common dodge of making a feint with the right and delivering a blow with the left; but Jack was as full of science as he was, and besides parrying his blow, delivered his antagonist one plump between the eyes that stretched him on the floor, flat on his back.

"Bravo!"

"Capital!"

"Well done!"

"As the old man would put it—'Egad, that's a good one!'"

These and many more were the comments from the on-lookers, as they began to gain more confidence in our hero's prowess.

Sam had by this time regained his feet.

If he had been astonished before, he was doubly so now.

For the life of him he could not understand how he had been so easily done for.

At heart an arrant coward, could he have found a loophole to crawl out of he would have done it, as his previous confidence in his own ability now began to ooze out from the tips of his fingers.

He hesitated; but as he chanced to look at the circle of faces with which they were surrounded, and saw written on them that which plainly indicated the exultation which they would feel at his downfall, he became re-nerved with a desperation to do or die.

Again he changed his tactics, this time endeavoring to throw Jack off guard, and then deliver him a blow, or kick him in the stomach, and thus place him *hors du combat*.

The latter he tried, but was foiled by Jack seizing his foot and jerking it violently upward, which threw the bully over backward, his head resounding as it struck the floor.

With a yell of rage he flung prudence to the winds, and jumping to his feet, rushed madly, blindly at Jack.

The reception our hero gave him was such that he speedily lay in just the same position he had occupied before, the blood streaming from his nose, and with both eyes swollen nearly shut.

His courage was gone; he thought Jack invincible, and with a sullen look on his face as he arose, muttered:

"I'll be even with you yet, if I die for it!"

"Bah!" replied Jack, contemptuously, as the bully left.

"Starboard, you're a brick," said one of his messmates, advancing and proffering his hand. "I like you, and am glad you thrashed that mean sneak of a Brewster—my name's George Long."

"I'm right glad to meet you," replied Jack, accepting and shaking the proffered hand heartily. "And I know I'll like you, for, if your looks don't belie you, you are as fond of a joke as myself."

"That I am," replied Long.

"Then we'll have some pleasant times, i' faith we will. Would you like to see a little fun to-night?" he asked in an undertone.

"Yes."

"We'll be on the late dog-watch to-night, won't we?"

"Yes."

"Good," said Jack, in a satisfied tone. "When you go to turn in to-night, don't be in a hurry—do you hear?"

"I do."

"All right—watch and wait."

The hammocks were hung in four rows in the fore-castle, raking forward and aft.

When opportunity offered, Jack slipped into the fore-castle unseen, and taking his knife, which had a good keen edge, he cut about three-quarters of the way through all the inside ropes on which the hammocks were suspended, his idea being to have the cut rope give way and dump the inmates into the middle of the floor.

The dog-watches, as they are termed, are two watches of two hours each, the first, or early one, being from four to six, and the late, from six to eight.

The portion of the crew on the late dog-watch gets off at eight, but are obliged to turn out at twelve o'clock again, which always makes them eager to get to sleep, and these four hours are really the only ones which seamen can be said to really have for rest.

Jack counted on this eagerness to turn in, and when they all descended to the fore-castle, he and Long quietly held back and waited for the fun.

"Now, who gets in his hammock first?" said Jack, in a disguised voice.

"I—I—I!" came from various quarters.

Then there came various crackings and snappings, then the sounds of bodies falling.

The hammocks all gave way about the same instant, heaping the students up in one bunch in the center of the room.

"Get off me!" yelled one.

"Ouch—the devil—somebody's biting me toe!" screamed another in an agonized voice.

"Let go my ear!" shrieked another.

"Ow—ow—ow!" bellowed another with pain. "Somebody's sitting on my head. Get off, or I'll bite."

"Curse you, what are you biting me for?" cried the person who had been sitting on the other's head, making an ineffectual effort to remove somebody else's elbow from his stomach.

"Let me up; you've squashed me to death," moaned somebody, the wind having been so forcibly drawn from his body by the sudden seat which a neighbor had taken on his stomach, as to leave scarce enough for distinct articulation.

"Jack, in descending into the fore-castle, had chanced to see a large Maltese cat, one of several which were kept on board, and succeeded, after a little coaxing, in getting hold of her.

Judging that the proper time had arrived, he threw her among the rolling, restless crowd on the floor. Poor pussy,

shoved and jostled as she immediately was, got her dander up, and meowing and spitting energetically, she began fiercely clawing about her, irrespective of person or rank.

"Help!"

"Murder!"

"The devil take that cat—she's dug her nails into my leg," said some one, cursing soundly at the animal.

"Blood and thunder!" groaned another, "she's fastened on my nose. Jemimy Pipers!" (this is drawn milder than he said it). "Jemimy Pipers! curse her—ouch—Oh, Lord—she's taken a piece out of my nose. Ow!"

"Oh—oh—oh—somebody's biting my finger," moaned one of the boys.

"And I will somebody else's," continued he, and opening his mouth, he waited his opportunity, and suddenly closed his teeth firmly on something.

Spit.

Meow—ow—ow.

Spit—spit.

He had bitten the cat's tail, and enraged tabby retaliated by skinning one side of his nose, biting a nice piece out of one ear, besides carrying away with the adhering skin a portion of an eyebrow.

It was a perfect pandemonium.

Jack to avoid suspicion had cut his own hammock as well as Long's, and hearing the tramp of rushing feet on deck toward the forecastle, he hastily broke his own as well as Long's, and as the larboard watch all rushed down, both of the lads rose, bemoaning certain contusions which did not exist at all.

When the starboard watch was mustered out the next day, it presented a sorry sight, nearly every one in it having from one to seven patches on his face.

One couldn't see out of one eye.

Another couldn't sit down.

Another limped.

Still another carried his arm in a sling.

The author of the trick was never found out, but Sam Brewster, being the most unpopular fellow on board, got the credit for it, even though somebody had sat on his head, while some one else nearly bit off his great toe.

CHAPTER IV.

PROFESSOR CLAWHAMMER—HIS BATH—JACK DISOBEYS ORDERS, BUT SAVES THE VESSEL—THE WATERSPOUT—IN THE TOP—PATSY—ON THE YARD-ARM—THE SHOT.

THE schoolship, as Jack learned from Long, had been visiting the various parts of Brazil, and was now bound for the African coast and the Mediterranean. There were on board nearly a hundred students, who besides manning the vessel, thus learning practical seamanship, pursued a regular course of studies, embracing mathematics, geography and the other branches, as well as navigation.

Besides, the students were, once a week, the recipients of a lecture from Professor Clawhammer, on various practical subjects.

The professor was a thin, wiry man, with a great bald spot on the top of his head, the few remaining locks being of a dirty sand color.

He had been a theological student, and had once attended to the spiritual welfare of a little flock of believers in a small town in Vermont. Hard study—so he explained it in a confidential way to a few friends—caused him to seek a stimulant. Some one advised brandy as the proper article. He tried it, and sad to relate—has tried it ever since.

He entered the pulpit one Sunday morning, so the story runs, in an intoxicated condition.

The cat was out of the bag, the suspicions which his parishioners had held being confirmed beyond doubt, and the Rev. Jeremiah Clawhammer was formally deposed by the brethren. He floated around loose for many years, and at last, as a man of fifty years of age, became a professor on board the *Mercury*.

Jack, but a few days after his advent on board, tumbled to the weakness of the professor, and determined to turn it to account.

While ruminating over what could be done, his eye caught sight of a large chest which he had been informed contained in bulk, drugs of various kinds, Doctor Jackson keeping smaller quantities in his own room.

With a little skillful work he had the drugs exposed to view, and after looking them over, wrapped up small quantities of the various kinds, writing on each package the nature of its contents.

Whiskey was a scarce article on board the *Mercury*, it being placed in Dr. Jackson's care, who had received strict orders not to issue any except to such as stood absolutely in need of it.

Professor Clawhammer seemed always to be feeling very badly about the stomach, and could never get relief until he received a generous glass of brandy.

Jack, one day, managed to purloin a pint bottle of the article.

He took about half of it, and put it in another bottle, after first mixing in it a portion of the contents of one of the papers containing the drugs.

This he placed where the professor would find it.

At four o'clock they were to receive their customary lecture, and it being a stormy day, they, as always under these circumstances, met around the mainmast, between decks.

About three o'clock, Clawhammer found the bottle. Picking it up, he glanced suspiciously around, but seeing nothing to cause alarm, pulled the cork, and after first smelling, tasted its contents.

With a grunt of satisfaction, he concealed it under his coat and darted away to his room.

Jack and Long had seen Clawhammer find the prize, and to Long Jack unfolded his plan for some fun at the professor's expense.

At four o'clock, the students assembled, but Clawhammer was not to be seen.

Word was sent to him, and, shortly afterwards, a thick-muddled voice, singing, "Coming Thro' the Rye," told of his approach.

He mounted a small platform, which stood beside the hatchway, where he appeared almost every moment in danger of falling through to the tank below, where there were some hundreds of gallons of sea-water, stored as ballast.

"Shentleman—I see you are all here," he said in a thick voice; "Are you all (hic) prepared to hear the lecture?"

"Yes—yes," replied more than one of the students, smiling at Clawhammer's apparent inebriety, and anticipating some fun.

"Zen, shentlemen, I will proceed," said he, the drug mounting more and more to his head. "I vill (hic) go on. The subject for to (hic) day is swimming."

"Swimming—what in—water?" queried some one, which caused a laugh, when the professor replied:

"To be zure—vat else?" and he blinked as knowingly as an owl.

"In what you are swimming—whiskey?" asked Jack.

"I swim—whiskey—nonshense—boyish—itsh an' insulz to my (hic) dignity to say such (hic) things," said he, striving to maintain an upright position.

"Professor—now no joking—can you really swim?" asked Jack.

"Not 'xactly, but I can (hic)"

"I know you can (hic). But how are you going to lecture us on swimming if you don't know anything about it?"

"When you fall overboard, good thing (hic) know how to swim," grunted Clawhammer.

"That's so, but, professor, what should you do if you fell overboard?"

"Swim," returned the professor.

"Where, to the bottom?" queried Jack.

"Boysh—you are all (hic)."

"Nonsense," interrupted Jack. "It's not us but you that are all—*hic*," mimicking the drunken man's air to such perfection that it was greeted with a roar of laughter.

"You are all fools," angrily said the professor. "Talk about—*hic*—swimming—I can do it—*hic*. See, raise your—*hic*—arms this way and draw—*hic*—them back—*hic*—so—"

How much further he might have gone cannot be determined, for in rolling around he stepped suddenly backward and disappeared through the open hatchway. There was a splash, and the professor yelled for help.

He was so befuddled that he thought he had fallen overboard, and Jack, catching the idea, threw him a piece of wood and bade him hold tight to it and swim for life.

Prayers, curses, pitiful appeals for help rolled from Clawhammer's lips, as he held fast to the board and kicked and splashed around at a terrific rate. He was nearly frightened to death.

"Stand up and wade ashore," commanded Jack.

Clawhammer rose to his feet, and with a serious countenance waded to the edge of the tank, from which he was drawn. As his drowned-rat appearance caught the eyes of the boys, a hearty and simultaneous peal of laughter rose from the lips of all, during which the now half-sobered man slunk away, conscious of his degradation.

The next day Jack and another student, Sam Braisted, were taking a trick at the wheel.

Scott and Meigs were on the poop and apparently engaged in earnest conversation.

Let us intrude.

"Do you see that?" Scott inquired of Meigs, pointing toward a little spot, as the saying goes, about as large as a man's hand, just above the horizon.

"Yes," replied Meigs.

"What do you take it to be?"

"Wind."

"Just my impression. See how rapidly it comes up."

The spot which at first had appeared small, rapidly increased in size as it scudded before them.

"And look," said Scott, pointing in the opposite direction. "As I live, there's another coming from the other quarter."

And sure enough it was so. The vessel seemed to lie about midway between these turbulent wind clouds which rolled over as they approached, dark and black.

It was a position of extreme danger, and the order was passed for the captain and Lake, the first lieutenant, who instantly appeared on deck.

Sail was already being shortened, and little was left for Captain Stafford to do in that direction.

"Lake, what do you think of the situation?" anxiously asked the captain.

"Dangerous," was Lake's sententious reply.

"What will be the effect when these contrary winds meet?"

"Water-spout—a tough time for us," grimly responded Lake.

"You've met one before?" queried Captain Stafford.

"Yes."

"Then I'll trust you to handle the vessel. Do as you think best."

"Aye—aye, sir," said Lake, pleased at the confidence in him which the captain exhibited.

"Mr. Meigs," sang out Lake.

"Aye—aye, sir."

"Hold yourself in readiness near the wheel in case you are wanted."

"Aye—aye," replied Meigs, taking up a position within a few feet of the wheelmen.

Meanwhile the clouds were approaching each other at a terrific rate. A sound as of thunder filled the atmosphere. It grew almost dark as night. The roar increased. The white-capped waves on each side of the vessel sprang, as it

were, in huge bounds towards each other. The noise grew so loud as to render the use of the trumpet necessary.

A silence as of death pervaded the vessel, and the students held their breath in suspense, waiting for the awful, the critical moment to arrive.

On—on, closer, nearer came the wind and waves, each side.

"My God," exclaimed the captain, "they will meet exactly where we are!"

There was a sudden rush and the *Mercury* careened heavily.

"Larboard the helm—hard down," yelled Lake.

Jack's companion would have thrown the wheel over as directed, but he held it fast.

"Larboard the helm!" yelled Lake excitedly.

Jack held her steady.

"Meigs, larboard the helm!" shrieked Lake.

As directed, Meigs sprang forward, knocked Sam Braisted out of the way and attempted to throw the wheel over, but Jack, who had been narrowly watching the movements of the storm, in turn, knocked him down, and threw the wheel over hard to starboard.

At the same instant the wind struck them.

For an instant it seemed as though the goodly *Mercury* would founder, but Jack, with Sam's help, kept her hard to starboard. She slowly righted herself and scudded before the wind.

There was a sudden shock, a crash inconceivable, and as Jack looked for an instant to where they had been scarce a moment before, an involuntary "thank God!" burst from his lips, for he saw the wake sucked up, as it were, into a great continuous column, disappearing among the low-lying inky clouds that fiercely and angrily rolled around.

For an instant the water-spout wavered, approaching so closely to the vessel that she seemed almost doomed to destruction, when it suddenly veered around, and scudded rapidly off in an opposite direction.

Jack had saved the vessel.

Had Lake's order been obeyed, she would have gone to the bottom, and this tale would ne'er have been written.

The responsibility of disobeying the command had been great, but Jack had assumed it, and was successful, but he had made an enemy. Lake, the first lieutenant, who felt sore and galled to think that our hero had been further sighted than himself, and indeed, so bitter was the animosity thus generated against the lad, that he endeavored to have him brought to trial for disobeying orders, but the captain was too grateful for their narrow escape, to entertain even a thought of such a proceeding, which discomfited him exceedingly.

But a few days later, while Jack was in the maintop, a wild scream of pain saluted his ears, and glancing deckward, he saw little Patsy Hogan issue from the scullery, closely pursued by the burly Spanish cook, Jose Carro, who brandished in his hand as he pursued the boy, a huge, murderous-looking dirk.

The boy saw his danger, and sought safety in the shrouds, up which he ran as lightly as a cat.

"What is the matter?" asked Jack, as he reached the top.

"Save me—save me!" said the boy, excitedly, unheeding Jack's question.

"What's the trouble?"

"Save me—Carro will murder me," gasped Patsy.

The Spaniard's head was just appearing in sight, and postponing any further questions, Jack said:

"Go out on the yard-arm, and I will keep him off."

Patsy did as he was told, but of a sudden the fore-rope gave way. He grasped hold, as he fell, of the small ropes that kept the furled sail in position.

With an almost fiendish cry of exultation, Jose attempted to follow, but Jack interposed his person, and asked what he intended doing.

"Kill him! ha—ha—ha!" laughed the Spaniard. "from my way!" and he brandished his dirk in such

gerous proximity that Jack involuntarily recoiled a step or two.

He stepped out backwards on the yard-arm, thus keeping his face to the Spaniard.

He stumbled, his hand was wrenched loose and he fell, but he was a gymnast, and threw himself away by a violent movement of the body, and in passing caught Patsy by the legs.

The sudden addition in weight caused Patsy to almost lose his hold, but with a desperate effort he managed to retain it.

These occurrences had all been seen by those gathered on deck at the foot of the mast, and Jack could hear indistinguishable cries as the scene progressed.

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed the Spaniard, gritting his teeth; with anger fairly flashing from his eyes. "Ha—ha—ha! I got you now," and holding the dirk between his teeth, he crawled out on the yard arm on hands and knees.

When close enough he halted, and seizing hold of his murderous instrument he drew back his hand.

But Jack had not been idle.

Grasping his left arm about Patsy's legs, he drew from his bosom with his right hand a heavy pistol, which he managed to cock with his teeth.

Again came the exultant, devilish "Ha—ha—ha!" and the dirk was descending on its mission, when there was a sharp report, a little circle of smoke, and the murderous instrument fell from the Spaniard's hand.

Jack's shot had broken his arm.

With curses loud and deep, he started up, forgetful of his position.

There was a loud shriek, Jose Carro lost his balance, and fell from the yard-arm.

CHAPTER V.

CARRO'S FALL—JACK AND PATSY—ON DECK—THE TRIAL—“NOW THIS IS WHAT I CALL HIGH LIVING”—IN THE SCULLERY—PROFESSOR LOFTY—THE DISH—LOFTY'S EXPERIENCE.

JOSE CARRO uttered one terror-stricken cry as his body struck the shrouds and bounded off, to be swallowed up an instant later by the waters.

When he appeared at the surface, although one arm hung broken and useless by his side, his struggles to support himself were successful, and with much exertion he managed to reach a plank which had been thrown overboard.

Meanwhile Jack had been hanging on Patsy's leg, swaying to and fro as the vessel was rocked by the waves. Jack was slightly puzzled for a manner of getting out of his perilous position, which he realized must be accomplished soon, as Patsy would not be able to long maintain their combined weight.

"Jack," cried Patsy, "I'll have to lave go; I can't stand the loikes o' this."

"Hang on a minute longer, old boy," replied Jack, in an encouraging tone. "Hang on, and we'll come out right side up with care—though I don't believe it myself," he added to himself in an undertone:

"I can't," groaned Patsy, whose arms felt as if they were about parting from their sockets.

"You must," said Jack, sharply.

Patsy's fingers began to relax their hold despite all his efforts. He glanced deckward to where the crew stood gazing at them with anxious faces, and shuddered as he thought of a sight that he had witnessed, of the maimed and mangled corpse of a young man who had fallen from that very yard-arm.

His fingers grasped convulsively to the rope, which he could feel gradually slipping from his benumbed hands.

"Jack—I can't help it—I'm laving go," he cried, a few moments later.

"Courage, Patsy, courage—hang on," said Jack, in a tone not entirely free from fear.

A man may be ever so bold and courageous, but bring him, in the full possession of his senses, face to face with death—a horrible one—such as this would be should they strike the deck, and methinks he will shrink.

Jack's exhortation was opportunely seconded by the encouraging call from the deck, in the captain's voice, who had been the first to recover his presence of mind.

"Hang on, my hearties, one minute and you'll be all right."

"Aye—aye," replied Jack, adding: "A minute more, Patsy; take it cool—keep hold of the rope, as you value your life!"

"Clear away the stays," cried the captain, for the time being overstepping the line of ship discipline and issuing orders personally. Clear away the stays. Lively, there. Get that belaying pin out, you lazy idiot!" addressing a slow, easy-going individual, who did not seem to comprehend the necessity of speedy work. "Now give way lively; hard to starboard with that yard-arm. Away with you."

The mainstay being pulled up sharply, brought the yard-arm around until it is raked fore and aft, which in turn brought it so close to the shrouds that Jack found no difficulty in swinging himself into them.

Patsy followed him an instant later, and then the two boys descended to the deck as fast as their overstrung and excited condition would permit, they being met at the foot of the shrouds by many a smiling face, and many a hand that proffered a hearty shake of congratulation at their narrow escape.

Indignation ran high against Carro, and had it not been for Captain Stafford's interposition, the Spaniard would have fared badly when he set foot upon the deck a short time later, having been picked up by a boat which had been launched, and whose crew were only too sorry at being compelled to perform the task.

Carro's arm was dressed by Captain Jackson, and he was then committed to the ship's prison until the next day, when a jury of twelve, having been selected by ballot from among the students, the captain acting as judge, a trial was had, during which it transpired that Patsy had misunderstood certain of Carro's orders. That at last the latter had grown so incensed that he had struck the former with the rolling-pin, which Patsy repaid by throwing a pot of hot tea at Carro, which enraged him so that he had caught up the ever-ready dirk, and swearing to kill the lad, chased him out of the scullery and into the rigging, with the results described.

The jury brought in the verdict that Carro should be punished, as having committed an unnamed but very grave offence.

Captain Stafford proved a lenient judge, and considering his broken arm a great punishment in itself, sentenced him to two weeks' solitary confinement in cell No. 2 of the ship's prison.

This prison, or "nursery," as it was facetiously called by the boys, was situated in the bow of the vessel, and consisted of six cells, or "cribs," in the ship's slang, numbered from one to six. Each of these was positively necessary.

It was to No. 2 that Carro was escorted as soon as sentence had been pronounced.

As for Jack and Patsy, they received notice that they might consider themselves "off duty" for the ensuing two days.

"Whoop-la! ain't this jolly?" exclaimed Jack, gyrating on his heel. "Patsey, we're busters, we are. Carro gets two weeks in the nursery, and we get off duty. Hurrah! bully for you, captain—you're a pretty square sort of a snoozer, after all."

"A what?" gasped Captain Stafford, who himself had granted them two days' respite from duty.

"A snoozer! was what I said. Whoop-la! captain, old cove, whenever you want a favor done call on Starboard Jack. I like you, I'm blowed if I don't. Now this is what I call high living," and throwing back his head and sticking his thumbs under his arms, he strutted away.

"I—I—er—ah, say," yelled the captain, beside himself with rage at having been addressed thus. "Come here, you ah—" in his excitement he could not speak Jack's name. "Do you hear—you—confound it, I'll cat's-end him, see if I don't. Say——"

But Jack had reached the fore-castle, and darted down into it without more ado.

He had heard the captain's cries, but as his name was uncalled, ignored them.

When the object of his wrath had disappeared from sight, Captain Stafford's ire subsided, and merely making a mental note of the fact for future reference, he forebore pursuing the matter further, and went to his cabin.

Besides Professor Clawhammer the ship was blessed with as great an oddity in the person of Zachariah Lofty, who described himself whenever opportunities offered, as:

"Zachariah Lofty, Professor of Mathematics, h'a graduate from h'Oxford, you know."

And whenever a fitting occasion presented itself he would also very graciously and condescendingly describe how the blue blood which ran in his family came in: His grandfather, so he said, having been the second cousin of a man whose great uncle had been knighted for his valor on the field of battle.

His other peculiarities were an invincible hatred towards women. Excessive pride in his mustache, which he was almost always toying with, an inordinate desire for anything in the shape of liquor, and an unappeasable appetite.

These were peculiarities. But one other thing—a fallacy—remains to be told.

For a long while he had been hard at work constructing a balloon "h'on h'entirely new principles, you know," and which, in his estimation, was to solve the whole vexed question of aerial navigation.

In person, he was tall and very gaunt.

Luxuriant hair which more than one was ready to hint was a wig, which idea, however, the professor scouted, claiming it to be "h'a natural growth"—on somebody else's head—was without doubt his meaning.

It was the first day of his vacation, and Jack lounged into the scullery where the cooks were hard at work, Patsey among the rest, he having voluntarily given up his leave from duty.

Lofty was always careful to keep on the right side of the cooks, and would usually call three or four times a day for "h'a bit of something to h'eat, you know."

The professor had snubbed Jack most unmercifully on one occasion, and the latter had determined at the time to pay him off; so when that morning as Jack sat there and Lofty came in, he set his wits to work for a method of paying off the score.

At last a huge platter of scalding-hot sort of *half-mush*—it being too thin for mush and too thick for anything else—which had been set on a bench to cool, struck his eye; it kindled up as he pictured certain results to himself.

The professor was regaling himself with some provender he had been supplied with, standing in about the center of the scullery, his back toward the smoking dish.

Jack stopped in front of him, remarking:

"Professor, they tell me that you can do all the problems in Euclid. Is it so?" button-holing the professor and stepping up very close, which caused Lofty, as he replied, to take a step backward in the direction of the dish.

"h'I think h'I can; at least h'I could when h'I was at h'Oxford, you know."

"Good college, that Oxford, isn't it?" said Jack, stepping up close again, which caused Lofty to retreat as before.

"Yes, the best h'in h'all h'England," replied Lofty, with some pride. "h'And h'I graduated there."

"England's a fine country," said Jack, again causing a retreat on Lofty's part, which brought him almost in contact with the bench on which the dish was resting.

"That h'it h'is," said he, enthusiastically. "But you bloody h'Americans will 'ardly h'ever h'acknowledge h'it. Starboard, h'I like you; you are a brick."

"I know it," replied Jack. "And you are another."

"Thank you, my——"

He got thus far, when, as Jack had anticipated, he sat down in the scalding hot semi-fluid.

"Oh murder—h'elp—ouch—fire—h'elp—the devil—oh—oh—oh!" gasped poor Lofty, the heat having penetrated through his threadbare pants, and jumping up he clapped his hands to the afflicted part. But the mess, as it were, formed a fiery poultice, and the result was that, bellowing with pain, they were quickly withdrawn. Unable to bear the pain, he bounced through the door and ran up and down the deck, moaning and groaning and calling for help.

"Mad as a March hare," said Jack.

The suggestion was enough.

The cry went around that the professor had gone crazy, and needed to be secured before giving him a chance to do himself bodily injury.

The students rushed forward and tried to intercept his flight, but it couldn't be done, for the professor was on his muscle. And it was surprising to see the agility he suddenly showed himself possessed of. Barrels, casks, coils of rope were not barriers to him just then.

At length he halted in his wild career, his hands went cautiously around to the injured part. The poultice had grown some cooler by this time.

Some of the boys thought the proper time had come to secure him, and advanced with that object in view; but taking out a huge pocket-knife he opened its largest blade, and, with a dangerous glare in his eye, bade them keep away, and then squatting, somewhat in the fashion of a monkey, he raised one leg and commenced scraping off the still smoking mess.

Inadvertently he raised the leg too far and got it hooked behind his neck, from which position he found himself unable to remove it, and losing his equilibrium, he rolled over and about the deck without regard to lines of beauty or grace.

"Help me," groaned the unfortunate man. "Please help me."

Jack unhooked his leg, and Lofty arose and speedily put himself out of sight.

Several hours later the professor might have been seen clad in a pair of borrowed pants, which were much too short for him, industriously scraping the muck from the seat of the only pair he owned.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK SUSPECTED OF PRACTICAL JOKING—CONVICTED OF IT AND SENTENCED TO THE "NURSERY"—OUTSIDE OF THE "CRIB"—PROFESSOR LOFTY—"COME OUT."

AFTER due deliberation, Lofty came to the conclusion that Jack had played a practical joke on him. He went to the captain with his suspicions, and as that gentleman held a grudge against our hero, Lofty found no trouble in securing an attentive listener.

Jack was summoned to the cabin, an investigation was held, and he found himself sentenced to the "nursery," "crib" one, for twenty-four hours, and to be deprived of his two hours "off duty," for a week.

The two hours off duty, as it is called, is the time that the students are allowed each afternoon, being free to work, play or sleep, as they choose.

As Jack heard the verdict, thoughts of rebellion filled his mind, but the comforting, solacing thought that at some future time he might be able to pay off Lofty, caused him to submit quietly to the penalty imposed.

He had not been in the crib over a couple of hours when he heard a gentle:

"Jack," breathed through the gratings of the door,

where he found, on approaching it, his chum, George Long.

"Well, Jack," said Long, jocosely, "how do you like your quarters?"

"First-rate—bang-up—bully—tip-top. I'm tickled to death with them, to tell the truth. Ever occupied any of 'em?"

"No," replied Long. "Lofty rather got the best of you, didn't he?"

"Just a little—blast him—but if I don't make him chew off his own ear, or the like, for this, I'll be hanged, shot, drawn and quartered! When I get out of here I'll not rest a minute until I have revenge—sweet revenge! Oh, how sweet."

"Would you like to come out a while?" asked Long.

"Yes, but how can I?" inquired Jack.

"I have a key," replied Long, fitting it in the lock, as he spoke.

The door opened, and after closing, they went to the fore-castle, where Jack, impatient to do something toward repaying Lofty for having him confined, opened his chest, took from it the liquor that remained, and poured it into a whitish substance, one of the drugs he had purloined.

It was after dark, and this was done by the light shed by the fore-castle lamp.

"That's for Lofty," said Jack, shaking the bottle to dissolve the drug, smiling the while. "Now the next question is, how are we to get this into his hands, under proper circumstances, without being discovered?"

"Hist!" suddenly said Long. "Some one comes. Let us have the bottle."

Jack crouched in the shadow, while Long advanced to meet the new comer, although he took care to keep his face in the shade.

As the person passed the post on which the lamp was hung, Long recognized Lofty, and said:

"Ah, professor, is that you?"

"Yes; but who h'are you?"

"Gray," promptly replied Long, mentioning another student's name, and assuming his tone of voice as near as possible.

"Mr. Gray," said Lofty, advancing to Long's side, "where does this 'ere Starboard 'ave 'is bunk?"

"Right there," said Long, pointing in the wrong direction, at the same time slipping the bottle into one of the side pockets of the sack coat the professor wore.

"Yes; I thank you for the h'information. Gracious! what h'is this?" he exclaimed, as, chancing to place his hand in his pocket, it came in contact with the bottle, which he immediately drew forth and speedily sampled. "How did I get h'it?" he asked himself, but he was too deeply interested in consuming the contents of the bottle to give much thought as to how he became possessed of it.

The bottle emptied, he began:

"Mr. Gray, I 'ave been foully h'abused h'on board this vessel to-day. Don't you think—ugh!" and he shivered and smacked his lips. "Gracious! but that brandy do taste h'a trifle queer, h'and I begin to feel sleepy. I can't h'account for't. What'd you say? Nothin'. I can't 'elp it; I feel sleepy;" and in his endeavors to keep awake, he commenced slapping himself, his long arms working up and down like a walking-beam, and his eyes began involuntary to close.

Altogether, it was so ludicrous to Long, that he burst out laughing.

"What h'are you laughing h'about?" angrily demanded Lofty. "I want—my head's h'all topsy-turvy. What h'are you daneing for? You're not? You h'are, blast your bloody h'eyes! Dang h'it! see, the deck h'is beginning h'a jig. Go h'it, old man! I'll clap for you—go h'in; I'll back you. Hi, yi, h'old h'England—yes—yes, I'll clap," and he made a ludicrous attempt at clapping for the deck to jig by. "I—I—can't—h'understand—what's the row. I—I," and he

clasped his hands on his forehead, and reeled and lurched to and fro.

The drug was rapidly mounting to his head.

After a moment's silence, he said, in a drowsy tone:

"I'm zo zleepy—zo zleepy—would you 'ave ze kindness, Mizzer—Mizzer—Gray—zo 'elp me zo ze cabin—I—I—zleepy—oh!" and overcome at last by the combined effects of the drug and brandy, he sank to the floor in a heap, unconscious and oblivious to all that was passing about him.

"What next?" asked Long, as Jack emerged from the shadow.

"Let me see," reflected Jack. "Ah, I have it! Strip Lofty of his clothing, while I overhaul my chest."

Long commenced divesting Lofty of his clothing, and had nearly accomplished it when Jack approached with a bundle under his arm.

Laying his bundle down, Jack assisted Long, and in a few minutes Lofty was lying stretched out before them in a state of nature.

Jack then opened his bundle and took from it an old, faded calico dress, which he had found between decks some days previous.

This they arrayed Lofty in.

With some black he happened to have, he colored the professor's nose a jet color, after which, being pleased by the effect produced, he made the chin and ears to assume the same sable hue.

"Capital!" cried Long, as Jack halted and drew back to survey his work. "Won't there be a muss when he wakes up? Jerusalem! won't he make things howl!"

"He'll have good reason to, I'm thinking," replied Jack. "But, come, help me lift him in Jerry 'Thomas' bunk."

"Don't do that," said Long, nervously. "Jerry is such a crabbed old cuss; he would be just as likely to kill Lofty as not."

"We'll run the risk. Take hold," and they lifted the unconscious professor, by exerting themselves to the utmost, and placed him in the bunk of Jerry 'Thomas, the boatswain, who was a cross, surly old fellow, of perhaps some fifty years of age.

Jack made a bundle of the professor's clothes, and then he and Long retired to a safe distance to watch the course of events.

Eight bells struck, and the watch tumbled down stairs. Suddenly there arose sounds of cursing, low, but bitter.

"What's the matter, Jerry?" some one asked.

"Matter enough," grunted the testy old fellow in a gruff tone. "Somebody in my bunk," and seizing the intruder by the ear he gave it an energetic pull, saying at the same time, "come out of here!"

A long howl of pain announced the fact that the effects of the drug did not make him insensible to such treatment.

"Come out," grunted Jerry, renewing his exertion on Lofty's ear.

A wild scream rewarded his efforts, but the professor moved not.

"Come out, will you?" demanded Jerry, tweaking the intruder's nose.

"Murder—fire—'elp!" shrieked Lofty, starting bolt upright.

"Come out," and as Jerry spoke, he grasped both hands in the professor's luxuriant hair. He braced himself, gave one strong, energetic pull, and an instant later saw countless multitudes of stars as his head came into contact with one of the stanchions. But the professor's wig had come to grief, for Jerry speedily made an end of it.

Lofty sat still, dazed, confounded by the turmoil. The boys had all gathered 'round, wondering who it could be in Jerry's bunk.

That individual having recovered, to a partial extent, from the effects of star-gazing, renewed the attack by seizing the intruder about the waist and dumping him on the floor.

Some one, more thoughtful than the rest, brought the fore-castle lamp upon the scene.

"Blazes!" ejaculated Jerry. "It's a woman."
 "A woman?" queried a dozen astonished voices.
 "Yes!"

"Jehosaphat, what a leg!" cried one, pointing at one of those long, scrawny articles, which was exhibited to above the knee.

Several of the students advanced and forcibly stood the shrieking, shouting professor on his feet. There was a rush of footsteps from above on deck, and a hasty crowding into the fore-castle to ascertain the cause of these unearthly cries.

The person who held the light now advanced and held the lamp close to the professor's face. For an instant no one recognized him, and then, simultaneously, all seemed to know him, and all joined in uproarious laughter at the figure he cut, which was ludicrous in the extreme.

Nose, chin and ears a jet black.

The top of his head shining beneath the rays of the lamp.

The dress was so short that it reached only to his knees, and elbows, while it nowhere near met about his waist, which displayed the upper front portion of his lean body very conspicuously.

Add to this a woe-begone and almost idiotic expression, such as rested on Lofty's face, and you have a description of him as he stood before the crowd, winking and blinking like an owl at midday.

The longer the spectators looked the louder they laughed.

"I say, professor," cried one, "what has become of your hair?"

For answer Lofty raised his hand and began circling it around on his smooth pate, and a look of wonderment lighted up his features.

"I thought you were a woman-hater, and here you've gone and copied their style of dress," cried another.

"Is this a new fashion, professor?"

"Who dyed your nose and ears?"

"Dust off your chin!"

"How did it all happen?" asked somebody, convulsed with laughter.

"Whisky did it," replied Sam Brainard, loud enough for Lofty to hear.

The unfortunate man's ire had been slowly rising, and at this moment reached its climax, and as this allusion was made to his weakness, he shrieked:

"It's h'an h'infernal lie, you vile wretch, h'and I'll throttle you before you'll tell h'another!" and he made for the lad, who, not wishing to engage in a personal encounter with the infuriated man, fell back, taking his revenge in crying:

"Poor fellow, he's crazy!" in such a compassionate, commiserating tone as drew forth fresh laughter and added fuel to the brightly burning wrath of the professor, who, happening to stub his toe, picked up the article he had kicked against, which proved to be a heavy boot.

"Seize him—he's a lunatic!" ordered Scott, the second lieutenant.

"Never!" bellowed Lofty. "Keep h'off, I say—keep h'off," and he brandished the boot above his head and struck wildly out in all directions.

"Catch hold of him," re-ordered Scott. "Go on, are you all afraid of one man?"

"Keep h'away, or I'll make 'ash h'of you!" shrieked Lofty, keeping the boot in motion.

The students facing the professor did not care about getting very close, but some of them in the rear advanced near enough to seize hold of the dress.

Lofty found himself taken at a disadvantage, and resolved to fight his way to the deck.

With this idea in view he advanced, clearing a way in front with his novel weapon of warfare, but those in the rear held fast to the dress and endeavored to hold him back.

It was a question of strength between the students, the dress, and the professor, which was at last solved by the

dress splitting all the way up the front, the professor shedding it as a snail might its shell, thus leaving him in a state of nature.

The sudden giving way of the dress allowed him to shoot forward, and he struck the deck on his hands and knees.

Many a one of the students owed the professor a grudge.

The opportunity was too good to be lost, and before he could gain his feet—spat—spat—spat—resounded again and again.

"Ow—ow—oo—oo—oo!" groaned the professor. "Oh! Lord save me—you murdering devils—ow!" as a heavier blow than usual took him on the part that had been blistered that afternoon by the mush; and struggling to his feet, he forced his way through the crowd to the deck, where he was found a short time afterwards concealed behind a water-cask, half crazed with fear.

"Whoop-la!" cried a voice, strangely like Jack's, as the professor disappeared from the fore-castle, and the individual who uttered the cry but a few moments later was relocked in the "nursery" in "crib" one.

CHAPTER VII.

GRAY VINDICATES HIMSELF—THE NIMBLE REEFER—A SHIP IN DISTRESS—DETAILED ON BOARD THE "DUBOIS"—"THE SHIP'S ON FIRE."

The professor was escorted to his room and put to bed, after taking a sedative draught which Doctor Jackson prepared.

The students talked the matter over during the long hours of the night, and wondered and asked each other for a solution of the events that had transpired.

Curiosity was excited to the highest pitch, and every one was on the *qui vive* for the examination they felt sure would follow.

A search revealed the empty bottle and the professor's clothing, which Jack had cast into a corner.

After much urging, since Lofty did not wish to admit having drank any liquor, when he had awoke late the next day in a somewhat tranquilized state of mind, he made a clear breast of the affair to the captain.

Gray, the student whose name and identity Long had usurped, was called to the cabin to find himself, much to his astonishment, accused of having committed the outrage on the professor.

The captain, although not particularly a friend to the professor, considered the joke on him too flagrant to pass by unnoticed, and had determined to bring the offender to justice; so when it seemed so clear that Gray had been one of, if not the conspirator against Lofty's peace, he did not stop for ceremony, but roughly opened on the lad.

Gray was speechless for some moments, but at last managed to gasp:

"I don't know anything about it."

"What?" demanded Captain Stafford, fiercely scowling at Gray. "Wasn't you in the fore-castle last night—say between three and four or four and five bells?"

"No, sir," replied Gray, trembling in every joint.

"And didn't you help to undress the professor?"

"No, sir."

"Be careful and tell no lies," said Captain Stafford, in a warning tone. "Where were you then?"

"On the lookout," replied Gray, and this he proved to the captain's satisfaction, which, as it could not permit his being in the fore-castle at the time Lofty had given, cleared him of all suspicion of complicity in the matter.

It was clear, then, that somebody had personated Gray.

But who?

Captain Stafford puzzled over the matter, examined each and every one who could possibly have been in the fore-castle at the time, but the examination was fruitless, and the affair remained enshrouded in mystery.

Jack's hours in the "nursery" were pleasant ones, his

thoughts being occupied by the remembrance of his gratified desire for revenge on the person who caused his incarceration.

"I owe Captain Stafford one, too," muttered Jack to himself. "And he'll get it, too, if I have to manufacture a volcano or a small-sized earthquake to help me."

It was the day after that of his imprisonment that Jack obtained the name of *The Nimble Reefer*.

A blow came on, and so suddenly that it was upon them before they were aware of it.

The command to shorten sail was given, and among others, Jack sprang to obey the order.

The sails bellied out until the tension seemed about to start the bolt-ropes from their sockets.

There was a short, sharp snap, as of a thousand whipcords, and the main topsail was flying into ribbons.

The spars strained heavily, the ship careened wildly, but Jack cared not, and as coolly commenced reefing as if it were the clearest of weather, and they were lying in the smoothest of water.

His example was infectious, and, despite the danger, the vessel was soon close-reefed and scudding before the wind, which had now commenced, as an old tar would term it, "to blow great guns."

He had selected and reefed the more dangerous portions, clinging like a cat in his precarious situation.

Ever after he would occasionally overhear himself referred to as *The Nimble Reefer*.

They were within between three or four hundred miles of Portugal, when a ship was sighted in the offing, with her flag at half mast, denoting distress.

The *Mercury's* course was changed slightly, so as to bear down on the distressed ship, which was now getting near enough for those on the deck of the schoolship, with the aid of a glass, to see that she was in a dismantled condition.

When boarded by Captain Stafford, he learned from the captain, who was a squat, ill-looking Frenchman, who gave his own name as Emile Lachat, and that of the ship as *Marie Dubois*, that they had left an American port with a crew of thirty men and forty-seven passengers, and that she was laden with a mixed cargo.

One of the passengers had fallen overboard; they had attempted to save him by dispatching a boat to his rescue, which, by some unaccountable accident, capsized. A second boat was launched to aid the inmates of the first, who were struggling for life in the water.

So intent were they on the result of this second expedition, that the same fierce squall which had taken the *Mercury* in its track, swooped down on them unawares.

The sailors did all in their power to avert the consequences of their negligence, but when the squall had passed, Captain Lachat found himself left with but five of his crew, those who had not perished in the small boats having been thrown overboard and drowned when the spars gave way, while they were bravely attempting to take in the sails.

When questioned as to why he had not rigged jury-masts, and thus endeavored to reach port, Captain Lachat replied that, owing to the parsimoniousness of the ship's owners, he was unprovided with extra spars and sails.

To Captain Stafford this was hardly credible, the fact that any vessel would put to sea unprovided for cases of emergency, such as the one presented.

In answer to the French captain's appeal for aid, Captain Stafford sent the *Mercury's* carpenter on board the *Dubois*, together with several unused spars and extra sails.

The two vessels lay near each other all night, work meanwhile being kept up on the French ship, and when morning dawned the *Dubois* was making headway toward the distant coast, under easy sail. A conference was had between the two captains, which resulted in the understanding that Captain Stafford would place fifteen of his young sailors on board the *Dubois*, and bear her company to the nearest port, which proved to be Oporto.

Among those sent on board the French ship were Jack and his chums, George Long and Sam Brewster.

They kept in sight of each other during the day, but at night, despite the blue lights that each burned, they managed to get separated, so that when morning dawned again neither could see aught of the other.

All day long the *Dubois* held straight to her course, making good headway, the wind having started up from a favorable direction, and the passengers, who had long since lost faith in Captain Lachat, and who had remained easy in their minds so long as the *Mercury* remained in sight, and grew fearful as soon as they missed her, began to grow hopeful, especially when told that everything proving favorable they would see land by the coming morning's light.

The passengers had gone to rest and everything was quiet on board the ship, when suddenly there arose that terror-inspiring cry of:

"The ship's on fire!"

With inconceivable rapidity the cry spread, and with terror-stricken faces and hearts wrung by fear, the passengers began pouring on deck, clad, half-clad, some in their night-clothing, and some with scarce that.

The sailors and most of the students were panic-stricken, but Jack kept his presence of mind, and seizing the man who had raised the alarmed roughly by the shoulders, asked him where the fire was.

"In the hold!" gasped the half-frightened to death individual.

"Whereabouts?" demanded Jack.

"The—hatch—nearest—the—cabin," brokenly answered the man.

Long stood by his side, and a sudden lunge of the vessel indicating that the wheelman had fled, Jack said:

"Long, take the wheel—quick, keep her steady and I'll find out how much truth there is in this thing."

"Aye—aye," replied Long, taking the designated position.

Darting into the cabin, Jack passed through it to the hold, where, raising the after hatch, he saw beneath him a bright, burning, glowing fire, which, as he instantly saw, could not be put out.

Closing and battening the hatch, to allow as little circulation of air as possible, he returned to the deck, where all was turmoil and confusion.

Just at that moment he heard a slight noise of running tackle, and the next instant there arose a cry of:

"The captain has deserted us."

And sure enough, the captain and his first officer had availed themselves of the opportunity, and lowered the last and only small boat, and were now endeavoring to secure their own safety.

Jack sprang to the tackle on which the boat had lately hung, but it swung loosely to and fro, the two dastardly cowards being by this time some distance astern.

There was a splash, as some crazed unfortunate, springing overboard, was swallowed up by the waters.

The cry of the captain having deserted them bore to the unfortunates' ears the proof of the dreadful fact of the ship being on fire, and was followed by a torrent of shrieks, yells, prayers, and cries for assistance from God.

The life-preservers, there not being enough to supply all, were being fought for with demon-like ferocity. Jack saw one poor frightened human, half-clad, with a babe in her arms, eagerly clutch the preserver she had been so fortunate as to secure. The next instant he heard a shrill scream, and turning, saw her struggling to retain its possession, a huge, burly brute having tried to snatch it from her.

In an instant his pistol leaped from his belt, there was a sharp report, and the dastardly ruffian fell to the deck, a bullet having pierced his brain. He saw that what was to be done must be done decidedly and promptly.

The shot had attracted attention, and jumping upon the poop, he cried out:

"Order! The first one I find making a disturbance I will shoot! Listen to me: You are in no immediate danger. In three or four hours we will be in sight of land. Let every man return to his post. Your captain has deserted you, but I will take you safe into port. Keep quiet, do your duty, and all will be well."

This speech had the desired effect, and, although quiet, so far as the women were concerned, was not secured, the panic was over.

Every stitch of canvas that they could find room for was stuck on the spars, and the wind having freshened they bowled rapidly along.

Meanwhile the fire had been slowly but steadily increasing in volume, and the deck began to grow hot. For one instant Jack raised the hatch and gazed into the fiery depths, and then drew back, breathing a prayer for their safety. The whole interior of the after part of the vessel was in flames, and Jack knew that ere long it must break through its shell—and then—he shuddered as fancy painted the picture.

He next ordered Long to the bows as a lookout, and commanded Brewster, who stood by, to take the wheel. The latter demurred, but the presentation of the pistol to his head changed his mind.

The deck at last began to warp, and the glow began to be seen through the chinks.

He ordered the crew and all the passengers to the front of the vessel. Brewster would have followed, but Jack drove him back to the wheel.

The lights of Oporto were in sight, but so was the lights of the fire which now broke through just in front of the quarter-deck, and began running up the stump of the mizzen-mast.

Again the panic seized the persons drawn up in the bows of the vessel, and many a one would have found a watery grave had it not been for the prompt action of Long in shooting down several who attempted it.

"Keep cool," he yelled, so as to make himself heard. "Keep quiet, we are nearly ashore."

It seemed a direct act of Providence, this wind that was blowing on shore, and wafting them toward it so rapidly.

The flames leaped up higher and higher, until at last a wall of fire cut off the stern from the stem of the vessel. Jack and Brewster were completely isolated. The devouring elements crept each way, and Jack was at last compelled to retreat from the poop.

They passed the Oporto lighthouse, were only a couple of miles off shore.

"God help us, for man cannot," was Jack's inward thought, as the great fiery tongues of flame darted out, its hot blast scorching where it touched. He took hold of the wheel.

The heat grew intense. He felt his face begin to blister, but he wavered not.

He heard a cry from Brewster. Glancing quickly about, he saw that individual pause for a moment on the gunwale, and then jump overboard.

"Alone!" burst from his lips. "But, God helping me, we will reach the beach yet."

On the vessel bounded, and on the fire rapidly made its way. They were approaching the shipping that lay in the harbor, and Jack, in pursuance of the order from Long, ho hung in the foremast rigging, and waved his hand to indicate the course to pursue, threw the wheel to the starboard, which carried them past the other vessels in safety.

On the vessel went toward the sandy beach, now scarce half-mile distant.

The flames advanced nearer Jack. A tongue darted out. His pants were on fire. Seizing his cap, he smothered it with one hand, while the other held the vessel firmly to her course.

The water about them was lighted up by the glare for almost a half-mile, and Jack could see its surface dotted with

small boats, ready to render assistance to those who were now beginning to cast themselves recklessly overboard.

Again his pants are on fire. His eyebrows are singed. His hair shrivels. It is almost impossible to stand it longer. His burnt hands relax their hold of the spokes. He darts backward. At the same instant a shock announces that the beach has been struck.

"Thank God," burst from his lips, and, as the merciless enemy fires the coat on his back, he throws himself overboard, perhaps to live, perhaps to—perish.

CHAPTER VIII.

JACK'S RESCUE—THE CAPTAIN AND LAKE SEE THE BURNING SHIP AND THE BRAVE PERSON WHO STANDS AT THE HELM, REGARDLESS OF THE FIRE WHICH BLAZES ABOUT HIM—THE TESTIMONIAL—AT SEA AGAIN—SQUARE WITH THE CAPTAIN.

JACK had not deserted the *Dubois* a moment too soon, for hardly had he touched the water when the very spot where he had been standing burst into flames.

The ship had grounded some few hundred feet from the shore in less than twenty feet of water, and when Jack struck, he went down until his feet touched the bottom.

When he reached the surface of the water he was weak and spent. His limbs almost failed their office, and had it not been for the indomitable pluck of our young hero, he must have inevitably sunk into a watery grave.

As it was, he set his teeth tightly together, and exerting himself, kept to the surface until the outgoing tide carried him near enough to one of the numerous small boats, congregated as near the burning ship as was prudent, to be seized hold of by one of the occupants and drawn into it just as consciousness was deserting him.

When he came to, and opened his eyes, he saw bending over him Captain Stafford, and he recognized the cabin of the *Mercury*.

As Jack's eyes opened, a satisfied exclamation from the captain drew Doctor Jackson to his side.

"Captain," said Jack, faintly.

"What is it?"

"Did everybody—was everybody—lost?" he asked, and then waited patiently but anxiously for the captain's answer.

"No. Out of fifteen, fourteen came back, and forty-three of the forty-seven passengers were saved."

"And our missing one was?"—Jack hesitated, fearing and dreading to hear the name mentioned, thinking that it would be that of his chum.

"James Torrey," finished Captain Stafford.

A look of relief appeared on Jack's features; then, with a softened expression, he said: "Poor Torrey; he was a good fellow; peace to him. Can I see Long?"

"If you wish it," replied Stafford, after drawing the doctor aside and having a moment's conversation with him as to the advisability of allowing Jack to see any one in his present weak condition; and here it may be well to say that Jack had lain for two whole days in the cabin, unconscious, through the severity of the pain he endured. His hands were blistered badly, and were bound up with poultices until, as he himself said, "they were as big as small-sized hams." His forehead was also burned to some extent, and his hair had shrivelled so that it became necessary to cut it close to the scalp, which made him quite as bald as Professor Lofty.

The doctor consented to his seeing Long, and that person was sent for.

As he entered Jack started up, crying:

"Hello, Long, old boy, how are you?"

"Hearty, and sound as a nut. But how are you?"

"As you see," replied Jack, making a grimace and bobbing his cropped head.

"You did nobly, Jack—nobly in running the burning vessel ashore; and the passengers who were saved are going

to give you a token of some description in commemoration of the affair."

"Is that so?" queried Jack, delighted with the news that his services had been so well appreciated. "Whoop-la! Never give up the ship! Never say die! Hurrah! old boy! hur—"

In his weak state the excitement was too much for him, and he sank back suddenly in semi-unconsciousness, his thoughts being occasionally partially expressed in disjointed and unconnected sentences.

And now let us retrace our steps a little.

When Captain Stafford found that he had parted company with the French ship, he wasted no time, but put directly for Oporto, and arrived there in the afternoon.

That night a cry ran through the *Mercury*, as through all the ships in the harbor, that a burning ship was putting in and running directly towards them.

All was commotion. Anchors were weighed; as the *Dubois* came nearer and nearer the danger became greater, and the ships were moved away from the burning ship's course.

Captain Stafford and his first officer, Harvey Lake, are standing on the poop, side by side, watching the fast-approaching ship of fire.

"Lake, I believe that it's the *Dubois*," said the captain.

"It is, without doubt. Can you see the jury mast? I can—see there! the mizzen is on fire. See it dance up the shrouds! She is heading directly towards us. We shall have to move. On deck there!"

"Aye—aye, sir!"

"Slip the cable; spread sail—lively, now!"

And in a few minutes the *Mercury* bore away a short distance.

"Lieutenant," said Captain Stafford, "order the small boats away, to render what assistance they can to those on board that ill-starred vessel."

The second and third officers each received charge of a boat, and were despatched on this errand of mercy.

The *Dubois* by this time was abreast of them, and objects on board of her could be as distinctly seen as in broad daylight.

"See!" cried Captain Stafford, in excited tone. "See there! a poor fellow has thrown himself overboard from the stern. But—my God! there's another there still—at the wheel. See the flames crawl up. Kind heaven, what courage! The half burned mast totters; it falls. She's aground. There! he's cast himself in the water!"

Captain Stafford knew not at the time that Starboard Jack was the individual, but third officer, Meigs, had arrived close enough by this time to recognize his shipmate, and it was he that reached over and grasped hold of Jack, as he was about used up.

Meigs soon had his boat freighted with the unfortunates, and returned to the *Mercury*, where, after seeing Jack, and learning that it was he that had so nobly stood at the wheel, the captain had him conveyed to the cabin and placed in his own berth.

The next day the passengers were all conveyed ashore, and those of the students, who had been picked up by other boats, were returned on board the *Mercury* much the worse for wear.

The French captain and his first officer appeared two days later, having been picked up by an inward bound vessel. The moment they placed foot on shore they were arrested and imprisoned for their treacherous neglect of duty, and desertion.

Captain Stafford found it necessary to remain in port about a week, and the day he sailed, a deputized committee of the passengers on board the *Dubois* came on board, and presented Jack with an elegant gold watch and chain, having been assisted in its purchase by numbers of the townspeople, as well as many of the officers of the ships in the harbor, who had seen or heard of the bravery and courage which our hero had exhibited, and through which so many lives had been saved. To George Long a watch of lesser

value was given, while each of the remainder of the students were presented with letters of thanks and approbation.

Two hours later they were out on the deep blue sea.

The next day saw the termination of the Spaniard's imprisonment, who thereafter attended to his duties in the scullery, saying nothing to anybody, but the devilish glare in his eye when it rested on little Patsey, or when Jack's name was mentioned, spoke plainer than words, of the hatred that was seething and surging in his heart against these two persons.

One afternoon about a week later, while the students were gathered around the mainmast, with weak and tottering steps Jack appeared on deck, supported on one side by Captain Stafford himself, and on the other by his chum, George Long.

One of the students caught sight of the figure supported between these two persons; there was a sudden cessation of the recitation; a slight buzz of low conversation; then a cry rang out.

"Three cheers for Starboard Jack."

An instant of silence, and then arose simultaneously three rousing and heartfelt cheers, in which it is safe to say that all, excepting, perhaps, Brewster and Scott, joined.

Jack responded in a short speech, thanking them for the expression of their good will towards himself, and expressed himself as being ever ready to anything in his power for either or all of them.

To Captain Stafford he now expressed himself as sufficiently recovered to return to the forecabin, but the former would not hear of it, which resulted disadvantageously to him, as the following will show.

Jack had not forgotten or forgiven the captain's willingness to confine him in the "nursery," and determined to serve him a trick.

Taking a heavy, stout piece of cord, he tied one end of it to the foot of a heavy sofa which stood on one side of the cabin, and fastened the other to a chair on the opposite side, which was fastened to the floor.

The cord was about six inches from the floor, and a couple of feet from the end of the table.

The captain, Professors Lofty and Clawhammer, Lieutenant Lake and Jack had sat down to dinner.

The waiter in the cabin was a huge negro, commonly known as Snowball.

"Hurry up there, Snowball," cried Captain Stafford, having waited some few minutes after sitting down.

"Comin', cap'en," cried that individual, at the same moment entering.

He slowly advanced, bearing on one arm a huge steak, which had been obtained in Oporto, and kept on ice since that time, and which was swimming in gravy. In that hand he carried a dish of stewed tomatoes, of which the captain was very fond. In the other hand he held a tureen containing a wet stew composed of salt beef and potatoes, with the necessary accessories.

His foot caught in the string. He tried to save himself, but could not, and as he fell sprawling to the floor the dish containing the steak struck Clawhammer on the top of the head, breaking it, which allowed the gravy to slowly trickle down his face, while the steak itself flew square into the captain's face, and the smoking hot tomatoes gently poured on Professor Lofty's bare pate. Seizing the steak as it fell to the floor, the captain, with a great deal of energy, threw it at Snowball, but used more force than precision of aim, and it landed plump in Lake's bosom.

The stew, which was the last to start on the war-path, had by this time arrived in the captain's vicinity, and after hovering an instant above him, turned itself over, spilling itself on his head, the empty tureen at the same time converting itself into a cap, but being too large, it settled down over his ears.

He started hastily to his feet, and being partially blinded, he mistook Lofty, whose eyesight was also impaired by the tomatoes, for Snowball, and delivered him a smack along-

side of the face, which Lofty retaliated, thinking the captain the negro, by a straight out from the shoulder aimed at his opponent's eyes.

Instead of reaching this point, it encountered the tureen, demolishing it, and making the deliverer of the blow howl with pain and dance around the floor, holding his hand in somewhat the style that a dog would a wounded paw.

Snowball had gained a sitting position, and was trying to get the situation through his wool, when Lofty's foot became entangled in the string, and he sat down on the darkey's head, nearly breaking the latter's neck, and at last landing on his stomach. With a dextrous shove, Jack sent Clawhammer after them, and an instant later Captain Stafford himself formed one of the pile.

Lake had jumped up and was looking ruefully at his greased, daubed clothes, when Captain Stafford toppled over.

He started to his rescue, at the same time drawing off the table-cloth, which Jack had managed, unobserved, to pin fast to his coat-tail, and all the dishes, knives and forks, which fell to the floor with an unearthly clatter.

The table-cloth becoming entangled in his feet, sent Lake over on top of the captain, who was groaning terribly and puffing like a porpoise.

Each struggled to get up first, thus retarding all, and a downright scrimmage ensued.

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack, convulsed with laughter. "Whoop-la! go in, boys, and I'll bet on the man that wins. Whoop-la—whoop-la! Go it, Clawhammer," he yelled, as he heard Snowball howl, as that individual seized the darkey's nose between his teeth. "Zachariah Lofty forever!" as that person, seizing Lake and the negro by the hair, bumped their heads together. "Whoop-la! but ain't this jolly. Now you've got him, captain, stick to him," he cried, as he seized hold of Clawhammer's fist, which had begun descending with pendulum-like regularity on his head, at the same time adding to himself, "This must stop," and with a final "whoop-la—hurrah!" he seized Lake, who was uppermost, and by exerting himself to the utmost, drew him from the pile.

The captain was next brought up. Then Lofty, next Clawhammer, after which poor Snowball picked himself up, and clasping one hand on his stomach and groaning terribly, slunk from the cabin just in time to escape the remains of the meat-dish which the enraged captain threw at him.

After assisting Lake, Jack surreptitiously cut the string from the sofa and chair, and put it in his pocket without being detected, and the first opportunity rid himself of it entirely.

CHAPTER IX.

NOBODY FOUND GUILTY—"LOOK IN A MIRROR AND YOU'LL SEE IT"—THE FIGHT WITH LAKE—IN THE NURSERY AGAIN—THE SCHEME TO RUIN JACK—HOW HE FRUSTRATES IT.

THE appearance of the group as they stood there, blinking at each other through mists of gravy, tomatoes and stew, was ludicrous in the extreme. Down Clawhammer's woe-begone visage the grease was still trickling. Lofty's bald head was smeared all over with tomatoes, and with his forefinger bent in the shape of a hook, he was endeavoring to scrape off that portion which had settled in his eyes.

The captain was ruefully pulling the solid ingredients of the stew from where they had settled in his hair and great, bushy whiskers, while the first officer was scornfully looking at the spot where the ill-aim of Captain Stafford had caused the steak to land.

"Snowball!" screamed the captain. "Call him. Where is he?"

"I'll skin you alive, you black dog!" yelled the infuriated captain. "What did you do that for? Why did you upset those things? Answer me, you infernal imp of darkness, or I'll cats-end you within an inch of your life."

"For de Lord, cap'en, it wasn't my fault," was Snowball's faltering reply. "I dun got hurt, too—here in my stumach," and he placed his huge, black hand flat on the region mentioned.

"You lie, you scoundrel; it was your fault!" yelled the angry man.

"No, cap'en, please, it wasn't. Snowball couldn't do such a ting purposely."

"What?" screamed the captain. "Dare you contradict me? You—you—oh!—oh!"

"Lake, have the nigger strung up by his thumbs, and give him a dose of the cat."

"Please, cap'en, please," pleaded Snowball, going down on his knees. "Fore God, I—it wasn't my fault."

"Whose fault was it, then?"

"I dunno, but, cap'en, it wasn't dis 'ere chile's fault. Dere was a string right heah," and he pointed at the spot; "dat I stumbled ober."

"Who put it there?"

"I dunno."

"You dunno?" said Captain Stafford. "Well, who does, then? Where is this string?"

"I dunno dat, either, cap'en, but it was heah, for shuah."

A strict search failed to find any evidence of the truth of the darkey's statement, and had it not been for the intercession of Jack, who would not like to see the negro punished for any of his pranks, Snowball would undoubtedly have received the "dose of cat" which the captain had prescribed a few minutes before.

A couple of days transpired before Captain Stafford recovered his usual urbanity.

Jack by this time was near enough recovered to go on duty, and it was arranged that he should report to the officer of the watch the next morning. Jack had conducted himself with Captain Stafford in such a manner that the old-time asperity toward our hero had been uprooted, and in its place appeared a strong fancy or liking for the bright, out-spoken youth.

Lake watched this growth of attachment with envy, and began to show his spite in numerous petty ways. It was on this last afternoon of his convalescence, when he was strolling about deck, that he sauntered on the poop where Lake stood. The officer drew Jack into conversation, and as opportunity offered, made several personal and cutting remarks. Jack did not wish to show any disrespect to the officer by replying in the same strain, but at last forbearance ceased to be a virtue with him, and he took the next opportunity of giving a cutting reply.

"What is the difference between you and a jackass?" Lake asked.

"If you'll go and look in a mirror, you'll see it," replied Jack, promptly.

The blood forsook Lake's cheeks; he became pale with anger at this answer.

For a moment his voice was choked so that he could not speak.

"That reply means that I am a jackass?" asked the enraged officer.

"It means exactly what the words imply," replied Jack, fearlessly.

Lake became so enraged that his position as an officer was forgot, and springing forward, he suddenly dealt Jack a blow in the face.

As quick as lightning Jack's clenched hand struck him between the eyes, and he measured his length on the deck.

Jumping up, he made for the youth, who, however, found but little difficulty in evading the blows aimed at him.

At last he seized a marlin-spike which caught his eye, and flung it at Jack, who, seeing it come, nimbly bounded to one side and let it pass.

"For shame!" cried Captain Stafford, who had been standing near by. "Mr. Lake, do you forget the dignity of your position?"

Lake was nonplussed for a reply, so sullenly ordering Jack off the poop, he slowly paced it back and forth, one hand in the breast of his coat, while the other was occasionally raised to where Jack had struck him, which now began to swell and to assume a livid hue.

After an hour's communing with himself, Lake sought Captain Stafford and demanded that our hero be tried for striking his superior.

Although the Captain was well aware that Lake had been the aggressor, he could not deny the request.

A jury was selected; the case was tried.

There could be but one issue.

Discipline was inexorable, and the youth must be punished, no matter what provocation was offered, and instead of leaving the cabin with flying colors, Jack left it in disgrace—left it to become an inmate of the "nursery" for forty-eight hours.

"I'll get square with him, if it takes my life!" muttered Jack, gritting his teeth, as the door was closed and locked behind him, and he again found himself a prisoner.

The time dragged wearily by, and at last he was released from *durance vile*.

He had not spent those long hours idly.

In them he had conceived a scheme for revenge, which was to be elaborated when occasion offered.

About this time it reached the captain's ears that his supply of liquor was diminishing very rapidly, and he set watch on it in hopes of catching the thief.

Going into the forecabin one day, Jack observed Brewster and Scott, without their becoming aware of his presence, overhauling the contents of his chest, which they had found means of opening.

As he narrowly watched their movements he saw Brewster place something in it; and then, after locking the chest, they both stealthily retreated to the deck.

Opening the chest, after they were gone, Jack found stored away in one corner four bottles of brandy, which he knew he had not placed there himself, and which, consequently, must have been put there by Brewster.

Shrewdly suspecting a job of some kind, Jack took the brandy out and locked the chest.

What to do with it he was undetermined, when, as he moved his foot, it struck something that gave a metallic jingle. Stooping, he picked up a bunch of keys.

"Ah—ha! Whoop-la, my brave sneak, but I think I've got you where the hair is short this time," exultantly said Jack, conjecturing that they were Brewster's keys. In this he was right, and opening Brewster's chest he put the brandy in it.

He had just closed it when the noise of hurried steps approaching warned him that some one was coming.

He laid the keys on the floor, and shrank back out of sight.

"Cuss it!" growled the person, who proved to be Brewster. "Hang me if I can see how I came to be so careless as to lose my keys—ah," he exclaimed, as his foot struck them, "good enough. Here they are," and with a satisfied chuckle he left the forecabin.

"If I can guess a thing or two rightly," thought Jack, as this chuckle caught his ear, "you'll change your tune before long."

He had barely reached the deck when he was summoned to the mainmast, where he found Captain Stafford, whose face wore a troubled expression.

"Starboard," said he.

"Aye—aye, sir," replied Jack, saluting the captain as became his rank.

"I want to question you a little."

"Aye—aye, sir," responded Jack, taking off his cap and stepping up nearer to the captain.

"I have for some time past been aware that liquor was being stolen. We have tried to detect the thief, but so far have been unable to do so."

"What has that to do with me?" asked Jack, as Captain Stafford hesitated.

"Simply this. That information has reached my ears from a certain source that you are the person."

"Indeed," said Jack; "and who may your informant be?"

"That I decline answering. Is it true or not true that you took it?"

"I did *not* take it," replied Jack, promptly, the scheme that Brewster had planned for his destruction and degradation being now only too plain.

"I am sincerely glad to hear you say so, Starboard," returned the captain, and the term he used evidenced the sincerity with which he spoke. "But they say you have some brandy in your chest at the present time."

"Who says so?" asked Jack, so abruptly that the captain was surprised into saying:

"Sco—" before he recollected himself.

"I thought so," said Jack, sarcastically.

"Is it so?" asked the captain.

"No, sir," promptly and decidedly replied the youth.

"Scott," called Captain Stafford.

The second officer advanced.

"Starboard says that he has no liquor in his chest."

"Look in it and see. Don't take his word for it," said Scott. "Bring it up on deck and expose his dishonesty before everybody, as it deserves."

"I will go and bring it," said Jack, making a step or two in the direction of the forecabin.

"He is afraid; do you see it, captain. Allow him to bring it, and of course you'll not find anything in it when it gets here."

"Go for it yourself, then," retorted Jack, which being seconded by Captain Stafford with an inclination of his head, Scott called a couple to assist him, and the chest was a few minutes later placed at the captain's feet.

"Where's your key?" asked Scott.

Jack handed it to him, and with an exultant smile Scott threw up the lid.

After a moment's examination in the other portions, to avoid exciting suspicion, Scott drove his hand down into the corner where he had seen it placed but a short while before.

A look of astonishment, a puzzled expression, usurped the place of the smile of exultation, as hurriedly pulling out all the contents of the chest, no trace of brandy was found.

"How is this, Scott?" asked the captain, with a relieved expression. "I thought you were so positive about the matter."

"I was—I could have sworn to it."

"Did you see it placed there?" demanded Captain Stafford, quickly.

"No-o, sir," stuttered Scott, "but *my* informant did."

"I hope you consider my vindication complete," interposed Jack, at this juncture.

"I do," responded Captain Stafford.

"Then wouldn't it be well to examine all the chests, since mine has been searched?" and Jack inwardly laughed at the manner in which he had turned the tables on the person who had sought to injure him.

"A good idea," responded the captain, and forthwith ordered all chests on deck.

Nothing suspicious was found until Brewster's was reached, in which, snugly ensconced in one corner, were four bottles of brandy.

The look of blank astonishment that rested on the faces of Brewster and Scott, as they saw the four identical bottles of brandy taken from the former's chest, which they had concealed in Starboard's, was not simulated, and they gazed at each other in a wonder-struck manner.

"How is this?" demanded Captain Stafford, sternly, addressing himself to Brewster.

"I—I," faltered the person. "I—I—don't—know. Somebody—must—have put it there."

"Of course it couldn't get there without hands helping it," ironically replied the captain.

The lock on Brewster's chest was of peculiar construction, and no key but that which belonged to it would open it, which in itself went far towards proving his guilt.

A trial was had, and at its termination Brewster was sentenced to close confinement in the "nursery" for a fortnight, and to a deprivation of all liberties and privileges for the space of two months after he emerged.

He would have made a clean breast of it and inculpated Scott, had not that individual managed to whisper something to him which made him extremely reticent in everything concerning the matter.

Jack would have felt very sorry to have seen any other person on board confined for this length of time, but he was only too happy at seeing Brewster so severely punished.

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack, enthusiastically, when talking to Long. "Whoop-la! when they get the best of Starboard Jack, let me know it?"

CHAPTER X.

IN THE MEDITERRANEAN—A PLOT AGAINST LAKE'S PEACE—THE MEETING—THE EAVESDROPPER—THE DUCKING—"MUM IS THE WORD, BOYS"—"LORD, BOYS, BUT IT'S LAKE"—AT CADIZ—THE SPANIARD'S REVENGE.

AFTER leaving Oporto, the *Mercury* had headed southward, skirting the coast until the Straits of Gibraltar were in view, with its impregnable fortress on either hand.

These forts were objects of interest to all on board, on account of the historic facts connected with them, and every soul on board the schoolship listened attentively to the epitome of the historical events with which Professor Clawhammer regaled them as they passed by them.

The next few days were ones of interest, as they stopped at several of the seaports of Sardinia and Sicily, to all, except, perhaps, Sam Brewster, who yet remained a prisoner.

It was on the day of his liberation that Jack determined to pay Lake what he owed him, and seeking Long, he confided his plan to him; and then, late that afternoon, when Brewster was near enough to hear, Starboard said to his chum:

"It will be accomplished without any trouble whatever. The starboard watch will all join in, or pretty nearly all of them will."

"Then fasten below deck all those who will not join us."

"But," said Long, in an assumed doubtful tone, "I don't believe that the fellows will take a hand in this thing. When are you going to talk this thing over?"

"To-night."

"Where?"

"In the fore-castle—the after part."

"What time?"

"After eight bells, midnight, when the larboard watch goes on. You'll be there, of course?"

"Certainly," and separating they went different ways, pretending not to have observed Brewster, who had greedily drank in the conversation, never dreaming that it had been intended for his ears.

Jack watched him, and a satisfied:

"Whoop-la! the gudgeon bites," burst from his lips, as he saw Brewster approach Lake, and enter into a private conversation with him.

All the fellows in the starboard watch agreed to meet as indicated, though for what purpose they could not imagine.

After the larboard watch went on duty, those off duty assembled at the appointed place.

The fore-castle was separated from the middle by only a light partition, through which one or two doors had been cut.

After they had assembled and waited patiently for some time, some one impatiently asked:

"What are we here for, anyhow?"

"You see," began Jack, and then hesitated and listened intently, "we are going to"—again he paused, as sounds so slight that they would have escaped the notice of a person not expecting them, struck his ear.

Then, sinking his voice to a whisper, he said:

"Sh! somebody is listening at the other side of the partition. Brewster, I'll bet a bushel of clams against a peck of crabs, mean sneak that he is. I'm going to see who he is, anyhow," and calling to Long to accompany him, he suddenly opened the door and dashed through.

As he expected, he found a figure huddled close to the partition, which arose to its feet as the two chums bounced through the door.

"Come on, boys," cried Long, as he and Jack sprung upon the eavesdropper, who, although he struggled wildly, could not escape.

To prevent any outcry, they gagged him and then tied his hands behind his back.

"Who is it?" each asked the other.

"Brewster," was the reply.

"What are we going to do with him?"

"Churn him," suggested somebody, the churning process being in tying a rope around the victim's waist and throwing him overboard, and then allowing him to bob up and down in the water until half drowned.

Brewster had ever been unpopular, and the more venturesome of those gathered about the bound person entered heartily into the scheme.

The more timid, however, held back for some time, but at last all were in unison.

Somehow everything seemed to be in readiness, and the rope to tie about him was on the spot as soon as required.

The larboard watch were let into the secret of the approaching fun, and a few moments later the struggling captive was carried on deck and the rope affixed to his middle.

"Now, boys," whispered Jack, when all was in readiness, "some of you lay hold of the rope, or better, make it fast on a belaying-pin. Here, some of you, take hold with me. Now, up with him," as they lifted the

kicking, frantic individual to the gunwale. "Now—one, two, three, over," and they gave him a toss overboard.

There was a sudden strain on the rope, which now began to slacken and tighten again, with surprising rapidity, as the body at the end bounded from crest to crest of the short, choppy waves.

The moon, which had been obscured by passing clouds, now appeared, and the person could be seen helplessly dragging through the wake, at no mean rate of speed, as the *Mercury* was making a good eleven knots an hour.

"Haul him close up, boys, to give him a breathing spell, then give him another dose," Jack whispered.

The line was pulled in, until the victim hung some few feet above the sea, face downward, with the salt water he had swallowed running from his mouth.

"Now, slack up sudden," cried Jack, after a sufficient length of time had elapsed to allow the person to recover his breath.

Then all let go simultaneously, and again the body could be seen in the moonlight ricocheting from wave to wave.

"Haul him up again," said Jack, a few minutes later. "One more dose and we'll let him go."

Again he was allowed a breathing spell.

The action of the water when being drawn through it, had loosened the poorly-secured gag, and slipping out just as they were giving him a third installment, he sent up an unearthly yell, ere his mouth was filled with water as he again struck it.

"Up with him, boys, lively," cried Jack, and ever ready to obey, they drew the gasping, half-drowned person to the deck.

"Mum is the word, boys," cried Jack. "Will you all keep it?"

"Aye—aye," responded from all quarters.

At last one of the students, more curious than the rest, advanced close enough to get a look at the person's face.

He started in surprise, and in an agitated and alarmed voice, said:

"Lord, boys, but it's Lake that we've been churning."

And so it was.

As Jack had anticipated, Brewster had told Lake of the conversation he had overheard, and that individual, eager to gain any information which would harm our hero, had descended so low as to play the eavesdropper, and Jack was cognizant as to the identity of the person when he had given it as his opinion that it was Brewster, as he knew that none, knowing it, would dare to venture any such thing with the first officer.

Meigs, the officer of the deck, and who had remained near the wheelman for some time, so quickly had the thing been done, received the first intimation of what was going on when the gag dropping from his mouth, Lake yelled, before he was ducked for the third time.

He came quickly forward to midships, where it had taken place, just in time to hear the above-quoted exclamation, and to see a number of figures bounce hastily into the fore-castle.

"Whoop-la!" resounded through the fore-castle, as hastily doffing his attire, Jack hastily turned in, muttering to himself:

"That's off my mind. I'm square with the world again. Whoop-la! Hurrah! Jack Starboard forever!"

To describe the first officer's rage, when he recovered his voice, as he stood, wringing wet, the water trickling down and forming little pools at his feet, is an impossible task.

Neither would we wish to quote the horrible oaths and imprecations which rolled in torrents from his lips.

Meigs, for answer to a solicitous inquiry, was informed that he might "go to —," we will allow the reader to complete the sentence.

Captain Stafford was routed out, and was thunderstruck at the lieutenant's story and appearance. Such audacity was unparalleled.

A visit was immediately made to the fore-castle, but every one of its inmates seemed to sleep as sound as the famous seven sleepers, for it required an enormous amount of yelling and pinching to rouse any one of them to consciousness; and when it was finally accomplished, in the most sleepy tones possible the disturbed persons would ask:

"What's the matter?" or, "what's the row?"

There was some sharp questioning, but nobody could seem for some time to comprehend the matter at all; but when they did, all disclaimed any knowledge of the occurrence, and disgusted with their non-success, Captain Stafford and the first officer retreated to the cabin.

A strict and searching inquiry the next morning failed to elicit any information, as nobody, for his own sake, dared *peach*, and vowing eternal vengeance on every one of the students, the lieutenant gave up the job of finding out who the aggressors had been, although he began to suspect that the conversation between Jack and Long had been a put up job, and therefore suspected these two as the ringleaders.

And then Jack so ingeniously explained what had passed between Long and himself as to satisfy Captain Stafford, that Lake in turn cursed Brewster's supposed stupidity and his own ill-luck.

A month later they passed through Gibraltar and headed for Cadiz, at which point the captain expected to receive orders from home.

They arrived there shortly before noon, and on account of the shallowness of the water were obliged to anchor about three-fourths of a mile off shore.

A close observer might have noticed Jose Carro's eyes light up with an undefinable mixture of hate and revenge, as they came to anchor opposite his native town.

He moved stealthily around all day long, and had anyone watched him closely he might have seen the Spaniard gathering together the most valuable of his possessions and securing them about his person. They were to lay there until the next morning, as the expected orders had not yet arrived.

That night Jack was on the lookout as it chanced, from midnight until eight bells—four o'clock.

One bell—half-past twelve struck.

Two bells—one o'clock.

Three—half-past one.

The last hardly struck, when a figure emerged from the scullery, and, keeping near the gunwale, stealthily made his way in a crouching position toward the vessel's bow.

This person is Jose Carro.

Slowly he crept along, each moment drawing nearer to our unsuspecting hero.

He is hardly ten feet from him, when, seized by an unaccountable pre-

sentiment of imminent danger, Jack turned quickly about, which brought him face to face with the Spaniard.

With a muttered—*carambo*—he raised a huge dirk on high, and bounded toward Jack, and had it not been for the latter's agility in springing quickly aside, the blade must have entered his body.

"Help!" cried Jack.

Dropping his dirk, the Spaniard jumped on the gunwale, drew a pistol, and shrieking:

"Die, you dog!" fired point blank at Jack.

There was a fiendish: "Ha—ha—ha!" and as Jack fell to the deck, there was a splash in the water as Carro jumped overboard.

CHAPTER XI.

"THAT WAS A CLOSE SHAVE"—CARRO'S KNIFE—AFTER CARRO—THE CHASE—THE CONTEST UNDER WATER—THE RANDOM THRUST—IN THE MIZZENTOP—BREWSTER IN PERIL—HIS RESCUE.

JOSE CARRO, fiend that he was, gave vent to a demoniacal cry of joy, as he saw Starboard fall, as he supposed, a victim to the leaden messenger he had sent.

For an instant he paused on the gunwale.

As he struck the water, Jack jumped to his feet.

The bullet had not caused his death, but had approached very near it, as a small hole in his cap, and a furrow which had been cut from his short hair, plainly indicated.

The pistol shot had been heard by all on board, and those nearest now came rushing up.

"That was a close shave," ejaculated Starboard, feeling of his head.

"But—ha! what's this?" he exclaimed, as his foot struck an article, which proved to be the knife which the Spaniard had dropped.

At the instant the splash occurred, Meigs came rushing up, and excitedly called:

"Starboard!"

"On deck. Whoop-la, Starboard Jack forever!" and with a flourish of his cap above his head, he placed the knife between his teeth, bounded to the gunwale, balanced, and then dove into the water.

Carro had not gotten so far away but that he heard the well-known "whoop-la" of Starboard, and realizing that his plans had come to naught, vented his disappointment in strings of Spanish oaths.

He was taking things coolly, not expecting to be pursued, when the splash, as Jack struck the water, saluted his ear.

"Carramba!" ejaculated he, as he became aware that he was being pursued, and grumbling to himself in Spanish, he exerted himself to the utmost, and being a good swimmer, made rapid progress towards shore. But Starboard Jack was more than an equal in the art of swimming, and rapidly drew near Carro.

At last Jack could hear the Spaniard but a few feet a head. Making a little detour, he reached Carro's side, and placing one hand on his shoulder bade him surrender.

With an imprecation, Carro made a pass at Jack with his clenched fist, which the latter warded off very easily.

In vain the Spaniard endeavored to shake off the grasp of our hero. At last an idea struck him, and reaching to his belt, he pulled out of it the pistol with which he had attempted Jack's assassination.

Grasping it by the barrel he made a stroke at Jack's head, but Starboard had seen it coming, and releasing his hold of Carro's shoulder, he backed rapidly away.

Before the Spaniard could raise it again, Jack rushed in and seized hold of the pistol.

Then ensued a struggle for its possession, which was finally decided by its being lost to both, Carro, in violently wresting it from Jack, losing his own hold, when it sank to the bottom.

At this moment there came a cry rolling over the water:

"Ahoy—Starboard."

"Aye—aye," replied Jack.

The sound of oars, as they were dipped, could now be heard.

Carro knew that he would be punished severely if he was captured, and so exerted himself to the utmost to make his escape; but when he would turn his attention to swimming, Jack would speedily place himself beside him, and retard his progress.

"Ahoy—Starboard."

The cry was nearer than before, and rapidly approaching.

Starboard did not find an opportunity of replying, for the Spaniard, fully alive to the exigencies of the occasion, now began to fiercely force the battle.

Jack's hand was on his shoulder. He halted, turned quickly about, seized it, then, jumping halfway from the water, he threw himself on Starboard, and bore him beneath the water, where he attempted to hold him; but Jack was not to be held, and wrenching loose, darted back a few feet under water. When he appeared at the surface, Carro stood ready, and throwing himself on our hero again, bore him down once more. This time he had managed to obtain a hold of Jack's collar, and now that he had him down seemed capable of keeping him there.

Starboard struggled wildly but could not break Carro's hold.

His breath began to desert him, a sense of pressure, of suffocation seized him.

Death stared him in the face.

"Ahoy, Starboard!" came the hail, but Jack heard it not.

He gasped convulsively and the water ran through his lips. Consciousness was about deserting him, when he thought of the knife he held in his hand.

Twisting so that he lay on his side, he drew back the hand that held the knife, and gave one wild, random thrust at the body above him.

He felt the grasp on his collar loosen, and experienced the sensation of shooting upwards.

Then all was blank until he opened his eyes to find himself in the long boat, his head supported by Meigs, from whom he learned that the boat had been launched as soon as possible after he jumped overboard, and that they had arrived just in time to grasp him ere he sank.

"But Carro?" said Jack, inquiringly.

"He went down just as you came up, and nothing has been seen of him since," replied Meigs.

"I must have finished him," said Jack.

"You're all right though, Starboard, aren't you?" queried Meigs.

"Of course," replied Jack, in a tone which as much as said that it was impossible to be otherwise. "Of course—whoop-la, Starboard Jack to the front, all O. K."

"I'm glad to hear it, and also glad to know that Carro has received the punishment properly due him. Give way," and the oarsman, after an enthusiastic "hip—hip, hurrah" for Starboard, bent to their oars and made the boat bound towards the *Mercury*.

When the story of Jack's adventure became noised about, many of his fellow students who had hitherto been a little reserved, came to him and expressed their pleasure at his safety.

That Carro had fallen a victim to the random thrust of Starboard, was proven when, some days later, a corpse was found floating in the bay with a deep gash in a vital spot.

The expected dispatches having at last arrived, they weighed anchor and put out to sea.

Jack day by day was becoming more popular, although a student here and there could be found, who, suspecting him to be the author of some joke at their expense, were ready to speak ill of him, which he always repaid with interest when it reached his ears.

They had been at sea but a few days, when an incident occurred which redounded greatly to Jack's credit, as it evinced a readiness to imperil his own life to save even that of one whom he knew to be his bitter enemy.

Brewster had served his time in the "nursery," and it was the first day of his liberty.

Jack had been reefing, and in returning deckward had reached the mizzen-top, when he stopped a moment to cast a look around on the waves, which were rapidly rising under the influence of a brisk breeze.

The vessel's course being almost in the trough of the sea, was rolling a little wildly, which made it necessary for Jack to hang on to prevent being thrown from the top.

Chancing to glance deckward, he saw Brewster, who had been ordered aloft to do something, spring into the shrouds and come rapidly upward.

He reached the short shrouds which lead to the outside of the top, and ascending them, reached cautiously around for the outlines of the shrouds above.

The position, especially when a ship is rolling and pitching badly, is one of the most dangerous to be encountered on shipboard, and for this reason, perhaps, as much as any other, Jack watched Brewster's movements.

He caught the ratlin above with his left hand and let go his hold below with the right. An instant more and he would be safe, but the ship gave a wild lurch ere that instant elapsed; there was a blood-curdling cry, Brewster's hand was wrenched loose, and he fell over backward.

An exclamation of horror escaped Jack's lips, for he knew that to fall from that height meant death.

Holding fast to prevent being thrown off, he peered over the edge of the top, and beheld Brewster hanging by one foot, head downward, swaying wildly to and fro.

He took in the situation at a glance.

Brewster's animosity toward himself, his mean attempt to ruin his character, his continual petty attacks on himself, were all forgotten. All that he remembered was that a fellow-being was in peril, that he might be succored, and he was not the one to shrink.

Although the attempt was fraught with danger to himself, he overlooked it, and grasping hold of the shrouds was soon beneath the swaying form of his enemy.

"Help me," groaned the frightened and miserable Brewster. "Help me; my foot is slipping; I can't hold on much longer."

"Aye—aye," replied Jack, in an encouraging tone. "Hang on, my hearty, just a minute more, and I'll fix you all right."

Bracing himself firmly, and entwining one leg in the ratlins, he cried: "Now—drop!"

"I daresn't," groaned Brewster.

"Drop!" commanded Jack.

The only reply was a groan.

"Drop! I will catch you," said Jack. "You needn't be afraid. Drop when I say so—wait—easy now—Drop."

He had seized a favorable moment when the vessel was hulled over well to larboard, which made Brewster's fall somewhat shorter than it would otherwise have been.

Jack staggered as he received Brewster plump in his arms, but he held him tightly until the vessel rolled to larboard again, when Brewster caught hold of the ratlins, and a moment later was standing in the shrouds in safety.

The scene had been witnessed from the deck by many a pair of eyes, and many a heart almost stood still in suspense as it was being enacted; and when they beheld him in safety, whom death had almost claimed as its own, a sigh of relief escaped all, while an instant later arose a shout of congratulation to the lad who had so nobly risked his own life and saved another's.

This thought will perhaps occur to you, "Brewster of course repents ever having attempted harming Starboard," but if it does, it is a mistaken one; for he never even thanked our hero, but, on the contrary, repaid it with a piece of devilishness which a future chapter will disclose.

CHAPTER XII.

SPOILING FOR MISCHIEF—AN OBJECT FOR FUN—MOLASSES—"HELP, FIRE, MURDER!"—"HE'S A QUEER-LOOKING BIRD"—"COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!"—"WHOOPLA! GO FOR IT AGAIN!"—A HARANGUE—JACK SEE STARS.

"By jinks, Long!" said Jack, one morning about two bells past four o'clock, when the starboard watch had turned out, yawning at the same time. "By jinks, Long, but I'm almost tired to death with the monotony of the past few days. Come, now, you're a pretty bright fellow; can't you think of some way to raise a breeze?"

"I'm sorry to say I can't, at least a successful one. I would be sure to be found out—but you possess a knack of doing these things without being detected. Anything you propose I will join in, but I won't venture any of my own ideas," replied Long.

"Just as you say—but—oh! I'm so tired and—and there's no denying it—lazy," and he stretched himself as he spoke.

"You'll have an opportunity of working that off soon, for it'll be daylight in half an hour, and we'll all have to swab down the deck——"

"Which," interrupted Jack, "is something I'm not particularly fond of, and—whoop-la! cracky! But, if I'm not mistaken, that's Lofty coming this way—it is—and I'll eat all the old shoes on board this craft if he ain't a little top heavy."

"That's a fact," chimed in Long.

"I'll be hanged if it's not so. Yes, he's as drunk as the proverbial fiddler, if not a little more so—in fact, he's as drunk as a biled owl. Now for some fun. He's coming right this way. Hello, professor!"

"Hello—hic—your—hic—self. Wasser—hic—matter?" asked the professor.

"Nothing particular," replied Jack; and then in a quizzing tone asked: "Now, honest, how is the state of your natural system?"

"Waz that your—hic—sayin'?"

"I say it's a fine night."

"You say it's a—hic——"

"No, I don't say it's a—hic—. I say it's a fine night."

"Yez—yez—I unders—hic—tand. Gentlemen I'ze sleepy—and I'm—hic—agoin' to—hic—go to bed."

"All right," said Jack, "you have my permission. Tumble in as soon as you please."

"Zank you—hic—zank you—I—hic—will," and then as he allowed himself to sink to the deck, he kept saying: "Yes—I—hic—will, for I'm zo—hic—sleepy."

A moment later there arose the sound of snoring, as he embraced the drowsy god.

The deck, however, proved a hard bed, and he roused up once to grumble out:

"I don't—hic—zee why zey can't—hic—make zis bed up—hic—properly. It iz so hard zat I can hardly—hic—stand—hic—it."

Jack's mind had not been idle while this was transpiring, and as the professor's snores began to sound out loud and resonant, he exclaimed:

"Whoop-la! Long, I've got it."

"Got what?"

"An idea."

"Well, give us the benefit of it," replied Long, anxious to hear what Jack had to say.

It required but a few words to explain to Long what was wanted of him, and saying that he would be back soon, he departed on his errand, returning a few minutes later with a bag in one hand, and a tin cup in the other.

"You've got the molasses?" said Jack, in an inquiring tone.

"Yes."

"And the feathers?"

"Yes."

"Come here, then. Give me the feathers. You take hold of his head and lift it, and then daub it with the molasses."

Kneeling by Lofty's side, Long lifted his smooth, bald head, after which he elevated the tin cup and allowed a portion of its contents to run on the professor's head.

Smoothing this down, he poured more on, and then still more, spreading it equally around.

When this was completed, Jack opened the bag, and selecting those of the feathers that suited his purpose best, by the aid of the molasses affixed them to the professor's head, and it took but a few minutes before the usually smooth pate was covered with what looked to be a fine growth of feathers.

Jack then removed Lofty's shoes and socks, then rolled his pants to above the knee, and after a coating of molasses added a covering of feathers. His arms to a short distance above the elbows were treated in the same way.

"And now," said Jack, as the last artistic touch was added, "we want a small rope."

"That's easily got," replied Long. "There are a couple of stayropes near the forehatch."

"Bring one of them, then," said Jack.

Long procured a rope, and Jack tied one end of it about Lofty's middle, in just such a position that he balanced nicely when they raised him from the deck.

"Carry the other end to the top, and I will join you," said Jack, handing the end to Long, who now began to see a glimmer of the idea that Jack was driving at.

They were both in the maintop a few minutes later, and then in concert they pulled the professor upwards until he hung about fifteen or twenty feet above the deck, after which they secured their end of the rope, and descending the shrouds assumed a position immediately beneath the swaying body of the professor.

It must not be supposed that Lofty remained all this while unconscious of what was passing, for from the time when they drew him up from the deck he had been vainly trying to collect his muddled senses.

He reached out his hands, but they encountered nothing. He kicked, but the force was wasted on the air.

"Waz all zis mean?" the two lads heard him mumble. "Where am I? I zink I must be tight—but I never felt like zis."

"Just wait, and I'll sober him up a little—just enough to realize his position," said Jack, and seizing hold of a deck pail, he caught it full, over the side of the ship, of salt water. The sea was smooth, and he experienced no difficulty in carrying it up the shrouds.

When a few feet above Lofty he braced himself, and making a calculation of the distance, discharged the water from the pail. It took effect as he intended, sousing the professor well.

"Oh—h! Ah—h! Uh—h!" gasped Lofty, struggling violently, and endeavoring to catch hold of the spar which even his pur-blind eyes could see but a few feet distant.

The water had a sobering effect on Lofty, and an instant later, as he seemed for the first time to comprehend his position, he uttered a series of shrill cries, such as:

"Murder—fire—water—ah! oh!—help—I am—oh! ow—ow"—he yelled in agony, the last having been caused by a sudden lurch of the vessel, which swung him so far as to bring his head into contact with the spar.

Jack bounded quickly to the deck, and throwing the wet pail behind a

water-cask, joined the others in the watch, where he found Long, who had fled as soon as Lofty's cries broke out.

Daylight was just breaking, and as it lights up with inconceivable rapidity when once started, in that part of the world, objects were becoming more distinct each moment.

"Oh!—oh!—oh!" groaned Lofty, who still kept kicking wildly, and swaying to and fro, "oh—oh—help—help!" he shrieked.

With the exception of Jack and Long, nobody on duty knew the reason of these cries; and when first heard, all had started and gazed blankly at each other. Then, as they were repeated, all started in the direction from whence they came.

At length the dangling body caught the eyes of one who quickly drew the attention of all.

"Help—help!" cried the professor, as, hanging face downwards, he saw those congregated beneath him.

"As I live!" ejaculated one, "it's Professor Lofty."

"He's a queer-looking bird."

"So 'tis, but—egad—how odd he looks."

"That's so—what's the matter with his legs?"

"And his arms?" asked another.

"And his head?" came from still another.

"He does look infernally queer—well—I'll swear if I don't believe he's gone to raising feathers."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, don't you see? That bald head of his has a covering of feathers."

"Whoop-la!" chimed in Jack. "I believe you're right. And see his legs. Why, he's turned to a regular Shanghai."

"He's always been that," remarked some one.

"Barring the feathers," retorted Jack.

"Which you supplied," said Sam Braisted, sharply, who, having once suffered at Jack's hands, was ready to credit him with all the devilry which happened on board the ship.

"I?" questioned Jack, in surprise. "Not much; I couldn't do such a thing. Why should I do the poor——"

"Wow—ow—ow!" came a prolonged bellow from Lofty, as he butted again against the spar.

"Let's lower him," said Jack. "It might raise the very scratch among us if he was to be badly harmed," and in company with two or three others he mounted to the top and lowered Lofty to the deck, where he was raised to his feet and the rope untied from his waist.

A roar of laughter greeted the professor, as he stretched his tall, ungainly form to its full height. He presented a comical appearance, his head being not unlike an Indian's, the feathers sticking out in all directions.

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed one. "Professor, who supplied the wig?"

"Is that the rage just now?" queried one.

"Of course feather trimming is all the go just now," replied another.

"You're more of a rooster now than ever, professor," jibed one individual.

"My, ain't he proud," said one, putting his thumbs under his arms, swelling out, and strutting off.

"You'd think he was a peacock instead of a common dunghill orator," spitefully added an individual who owed Lofty a grudge, and took this method of paying it.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" crowed Jack, and from every throat poured a:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

"Whoop-la! Go for it again!" sang out Jack, spinning around in a delighted fashion on his heel. "Tiger."

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

An angry light which had been slowly kindling in Lofty's eyes, now blazed brightly, and seizing a belaying pin, which happened to be within reach, he started towards the mocking, jeering crowd, who scattered as he approached.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" screamed one, deeming himself at a safe distance to venture the cry.

With a yell of rage, Lofty sprang at him, and before he could get away, the angry professor had floored him.

As he would have laid another out, Jack, who had followed him up, suddenly turned a handspring and landed astraddle the professor's shoulders.

He quickly twined his legs about Lofty's arms, thus preventing any use of the belaying pin he still held in his hand.

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack. "Whoop-la! get up; easy—whoa now, Zachariah, don't be skittish. Whoop-la! Now show the gentlemen your pace. That's a good fellow," and he patted the professor approvingly on the head.

The shrieks of laughter that greeted this sally were enhanced by the ineffectual efforts that Zachariah made to unseat his rider.

His rage grew so great that he attempted to bite Jack's legs, but his rider was not going to allow that, and seized hold of the new mustache which the professor was growing in place of the one that had suffered at Jack's hands.

"Ow—w—w!" yelled Lofty, which was supplemented by a "Cock-a-doodle-doo" from Jack, which brought down the house, if we may be allowed the liberty of using a theatrical expression.

"Ladies and gentlemen—there ain't any ladies present, by the way—this is—as a side showman would say—this is one of the greatest curiosities of the age. The animal that I bestride, gentlemen, is not an animal, but rather one of those monstrosities which are sometimes met with in life. Born when very young, he early evinced a desire for the bottle—being brought up on it, in fact. As I said, he early showed a liking for the bottle, and, gentlemen, it's an actual fact, he has never gotten over it. Last night, although he is of a mature age, as you see, the desire to suckle overcame all consideration, and he placed the bottle to his lips, which is clearly evident by his present condition. You are all cordially——"

There is no telling how much further Jack might have pursued this theme, had not it been brought to a close, by Lofty's suddenly collapsing and bringing Jack to the deck with him, and giving him a rap that made him see stars.

The laugh was on Jack as he arose to his feet, rubbing his head, but, shaking that injured member, he repeated in a warning tone that old adage of:

"He who laughs last, laughs best."

Lofty had just risen to his feet, trembling with passion, when Captain Stafford appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOKIST UNDISCOVERED—IN THE FORECASTLE—AN OPPORTUNITY—JACK TAKES ADVANTAGE OF IT—PAINTING PORTRAITS—LONG INTO THE SECRET—SCOTT FIXED INTO THE RIGGING—HIS DISCOVERY—CAPTAIN STAFFORD—ON THE LOOKOUT—OVERBOARD.

A FEW words sufficed to explain all that was known of the matter.

Surewly suspecting that Lofty must have been the worse for drink to have such a joke practiced upon him, the captain ordered him to the cabin, and then questioned the students, but with about the same success that had attended his inquiries on the previous occasion, after which he made a short speech on the general ill-results of practical joking, and begged that in the future it would be dispensed with.

The result of these jokes on Lofty was that they all began to regard him in the light of a butt, ridiculed him, and, during recitations, evinced little or no care for his authority.

Scott, the second officer, as the reader knows, had tilted with Jack when he came aboard, and by the prerogative of his position, in divers petty ways, had annoyed our hero considerably, and when it happened that they had the 'tween decks washed under his charge, he kept Jack and his chum in the most dirty and disagreeable position all day long. Had he known, however, how disastrously this was to result to himself, he would have acted otherwise.

During the day Jack's eye caught sight of a number of pots of mixed paint, and he mentally noted their position, thinking that perhaps he might have some occasion to use them.

Jack knew that he was being imposed upon, but stuck to the work, willing to bide his time, which came very soon, as, on the evening of the second subsequent day, Scott was paid fully and completely.

It came about in this wise.

Jack, feeling indisposed, had remained below deck, and, while lying down, heard sounds of the opening of the door in the partition behind which Lake had been caught eavesdropping.

He arose and concealed himself—a presentiment foretelling him that the person thus entering the fore-castle was Scott.

And Scott it was.

Here was an opportunity that he might not have again in no telling how long.

Should he take advantage of it?

Jack pondered over the question a few moments, then decided that he would.

What Scott's purpose was in thus entering the fore-castle Jack knew not, but conjectured that it meant some treachery toward himself, which only stimulated him the more to seek revenge while he had the opportunity.

Scott stood with his back towards him, and Jack crawled cautiously and slowly towards him, until but a few feet intervened, when, with one bound, he landed on the unsuspecting person's back. Scott was so taken by surprise that he could not speak, much less understand what the matter was.

To induce sleep, Jack had intended using a small quantity of chloroform, and before jumping on Scott he had taken the bottle containing it from his pocket, and now clasping one hand over the officer's mouth, with the other he applied the bottle to his nostrils.

This had all transpired so suddenly, that before Scott could collect his senses sufficiently to make a struggle, he was beginning to succumb to the influence of the narcotic he was inhaling at each respiration.

His struggles grew weaker and fainter, and at last he lay like a log in Jack's arms.

Starboard's end was gained, and he dragged Scott through the door and closed it, after having procured a light. He then proceeded to undress Scott, a few minutes sufficing to accomplish the task.

He next visited the corner in which he had seen the paint-pots, and returned with his hands full, the assortment being black, green, blue, red, white and brown.

"Whoop-la!" said Jack, softly. "I'll make you wish you had left this chicken alone. I'll fix you so your own mother wouldn't know you, blast you! Now, let me see," he added, musingly, "where shall I commence? On his nose, I guess; that is the most prominent feature he has," and seizing the pot containing the black paint, he gave it an energetic stir or two with the brush, and then put a coat of it on Scott's proboscis.

As he passed the light in front of Scott's face, Jack enthusiastically muttered to himself:

"Now, that's what I call a splendid piece of frescoping. How handsome he looks! Let me see—what next? Green, I guess," and taking the brush from the green paint, he put a large patch of that color on either cheek.

"Charming contrast," facetiously said Jack. "Now I think a red is what we want," and he placed a narrow red ring outside of the green.

"And I'll put a white outside of that."

Suiting the action to the word, a ring of white was added.

"And now blue."

A blue ring was added.

"They may say what they please, but fine feathers make fine birds," said Jack, halting to survey his work thus far. "I believe portrait painting is, or should be, my business. Green, red, white, blue," said he, recounting the colors he had used. "What next? White, I guess," and he covered Scott's forehead with white, and by way of variation, drew a fine line of it down the side of his nose.

From that time forth he worked rapidly, and in less than half an hour Scott's body was covered from head to foot with great broad stripes of paint, red, white and blue predominating, "for," remarked Jack, "he's a patriotic sort of a cuss."

Some fifteen minutes' further work, in touching up this or that portion, and a few rudely painted words on Scott's breast, and Jack's task was finished.

He went and found Long, whom he conducted below to have a look at his handiwork.

For an instant Long gazed in amazement, first at the decorated body of Scott, and then at Jack.

"What's the matter?" asked the latter, laughing.

"I'll be hanged if I ever heard of the like of it," blurted out Long.

"Original with me," said Jack. "I guess that's so, without doubt. But say, Long, I want you to help me out of this, now."

"How?"

In the confusion of changing the watch, I want you to help to get him on deck, and if we can fasten him in the rigging, so much the better."

"It's a dangerous experiment."

"I know it; but we must do it."

"The old man is getting about tired of so much deviltry, and it'll go devilish hard with the fellow who is caught at any tricks."

"Long, I hope you're not getting squeamish."

"Not a bit of it."

"Then you will help me?"

"Yes."

"All right; you needn't be afraid; it'll come around all kerect—see if it don't."

The old dress which they had once dressed Lofty in, and which he had split, had been saved by Jack, and he now procured the same, and wrapped Scott in it.

They held themselves in readiness, and when eight bells rang, stood Scott on his feet, and forced that individual to walk up the companion-ladder, supported by both the lads.

By much exertion, which was unnoticed on account of the confusion incident to the change already referred to, they managed to fasten Scott in the shrouds, tying his feet and hands to the ratlins, with short, light pieces of rope.

The watch which now came on was the one of which Scott had charge, and it was, therefore, without a head.

Jack and Long were among the first to mention the fact of his absence, and express their wonderment at his non-appearance.

Word was passed to the cabin for Scott, but the answer was returned that he was not there.

A search was instituted, and a cry announced that he was discovered.

The effects of the soporific, aided by the cool night air, had about passed off, and the cry that proclaimed his discovery brought him to his senses.

He endeavored to move his right hand, but it was fast. His left was similarly fixed.

And when he attempted to stir his feet, he found it impossible.

With an effort he turned his head far enough to see the crowd that had gathered, and who were glancing curiously at him by the aid of a deck-lamp, which the holder held so as to shed its rays full upon his person.

"Curses on you all," said Scott, angrily. "What are you all laughing about?"

Scott's appearance and mode of asking this question proved too much for the risibilities of the on-lookers, and peal after peal of laughter broke the midnight air.

"The devil take you!" screamed Scott, fairly beside himself. "Isn't it enough to serve a man so scurvy a trick as to undress him and lash him to the rigging, without making game of him? You low-lived sleuth-hounds, what are you laughing at?"

In his contortions to get a look at those who were laughing at him, the stripes on his body seemed to shift their position, and his constant straining made him look like a huge red, white and blue snake.

At last Scott caught a glimpse at himself.

A look of horror overspread his face; so deep was it, that it could be seen through the heavy coat of paint which covered his features.

In his contortions Scott turned far enough around to display on his stomach, in rude letters, these words:

"An obnoxious ass."

"An obnoxious ass," repeated some one, as the inscription caught his eye. "I should have said a mule."

"I say," cried another, "who furnished the suit?"

"The state, of course," returned another. "Don't you see it's striped?"

"He and Lofty ought to go among the Indians," cried another; "for one paints and the other uses a feather head-dress."

"I say, Scott, is that the suit you wear in cold weather?"

"Rather airy, isn't it?"

"How becoming it is. Say, Scott, who is your tailor?"

"Has he got a patent on his clothes?"

These and many more were the chaffing questions which were propounded, during which his ire had been waxing hotter and hotter.

"Take me down out of here, somebody," he yelled.

Brewster, ever ready to curry, stepped forward and cut Scott down, being rewarded by the latter for his trouble, with a smack alongside the head, tumbling him over, his head becoming wedged in the center of a coil of rope which happened to lie in the right position.

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack, perceiving it. "Go for it!" and seizing a short piece of rope, he applied it to Brewster's posterior.

Many followed his example, and the poor wretch bellowed with pain.

Scott, as soon as he reached the deck, grasped a belaying-pin, and cursing loudly and deeply, commenced swinging it aloft in a manner somewhat ferocious, and which promised to be detrimental to the welfare of any one with whom it might come in contact.

The news that Scott was missing had reached the cabin, and Captain Stafford sallied out in quest of information. His indignation knew no bounds when he learned all. He ordered Scott to go to the cabin, and followed himself, saying as he went:

"We will attend to this matter in the morning," and there was a ring in his tone which clearly informed those who heard it that the captain meant business.

"Starboard," called Meigs, whom it now devolved on to take charge of the watch.

"Aye—aye, sir."

"You will go on the lookout this watch."

"Aye—aye, sir," replied Jack, and immediately took up his position.

Brewster had stood near and heard the order given, and a devilish smile lighted up his face as he walked away, muttering:

"Yes, I'll do it. Scott will back me every time. He saved my life, but—" and he shrugged his shoulders, "I couldn't help that. Ten chances to one he wouldn't do it again."

One bell came and passed.

Two, three, and four.

Jack was leaning on the gunwale, thoughts of the captain's anger towards the perpetrator of the trick on Scott filling his mind.

"Would he be found out?"

The question was a poser.

He sincerely hoped not, and yet he knew full well that fortune, which had smiled on him so far, might possibly prove fickle.

He heard not the approach of a crouching form; knew not that he was in danger.

Closer, nearer drew the person, still Jack remained oblivious of his presence.

But a few feet intervened when the person sprang forward with a bound, placed both hands against Jack and gave him a violent shove.

Jack clutched wildly at the gunwale, but missed it.

There was a thrilling call of:

"Help!"

A splash in the water.

And all was still.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE BACK TRACK—STARBOARD—FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH—"AHOY, STARBOARD!"—RESCUED—BACK TO THE SHIP—A WARNING TO THE GUILTY ONE.

THE cry which Jack had uttered as he missed the grasp he made at the gunwale, was heard by all the watch, who, with the exception of the wheelman, came rushing forward. In the confusion, the person who had pushed Starboard mixed in with the crowd unobserved.

"Man overboard!" sang out some one.

"Starboard!" called Meigs.

No answer came.

"Starboard!" again called the officer.

Still no reply.

"Kind heavens," gasped Meigs. "He is overboard—lost."

"What?" asked one. "Starboard?"

"Yes."

"Poor fellow—I'm sorry," said one, in a tone which showed his regret.

"God help him—he was a good fellow," said another.

"And a brave one," added still another.

Long and Meigs, who were the two best friends Starboard had, both stood as if dumbfounded, while these sentiments were being expressed.

At last, with a heaving breast, and in a voice choking with anguish, Long slowly and pathetically said:

"Poor, poor Jack—gone!" and then after an instant's pause he added, "but perhaps he can be saved—Meigs, Meigs, can't we save him?"

The lethargy which had held Meigs seemed broken by Long's words, and turning abruptly about, he cried energetically:

"On deck—on deck—lay aloft there lively, boys—quick now—for the sake of Starboard Jack—and God granting it, we'll find him still afloat."

"Starboard Jack—Starboard Jack!" the murmured name ran through the group. There was one grand shout of acquiescence, and away they darted.

"Port your helm—hard down," he ordered the men at the wheel.

"Bring her about and put her on the back track."

"Aye—aye—sir," and as they threw it over, one said:

"God grant it may save us Starboard Jack."

The loosened sails began flapping against the masts as she came up in the wind. Then close hauled, she started in the direction whence she had just came.

They had gone between two and three miles since Jack's being lost, and when about that distance had been retraced, Meigs ordered the jolly-boat got in readiness for launching.

Scott, Lake and Captain Stafford had appeared on deck, and the second officer taking charge of the watch, left Meigs free to assume command of the jolly-boat.

"Lay aloft there, boys!" was the order given, after which the sails were laid aback, and the boat, under Meigs' care, was launched, and started out on the almost hopeless task.

Meanwhile, how fared Jack?

In falling he struck the water sideways, which, for the time being, almost deprived him of breath. The next instant the *Mercury's* bows brushed against him, throwing him to one side, and when he regained his breath, it was of no use calling for aid, as the lights of the ship were already far in the distance and fast receding.

"Crackey!" said Starboard, ruefully, "this ain't any nice kind of position to be in. What can a fellow do? Nothing that I can see except to stay afloat as long as possible, and when worst comes to worst, submit with as much grace as possible. Good old Daddy Mike—rest his soul—was right; sea-life is full of drawbacks, and this is one of 'em. Whoop!" but what's the use of giving way? I won't do it, so there," and setting his teeth firmly together, he slowly paddled along in the still-rolling wake of the *Mercury*. He went very slowly indeed, knowing full well that his strength needed careful husbanding.

He correctly surmised that the ship would be laid-to, but even then he could but acknowledge that his chance of succor, floating around as he was in the dead of night, in the wide waste of waters which surrounded him, was very small.

The minutes as they passed seemed ages, and his hopes were beginning to fail when suddenly a flash of light in the distance caused renewed hope to kindle within his breast.

Again came the flash, as the blue lights were burned on the *Mercury*, which was slowly creeping toward our hero.

Inspired by the hope of rescue, his body seemed nerved with double strength, but the length of time he had been in the water was beginning to tell on him, and he felt that succor must come soon or it would be too late.

To his sorrow, he saw by the relative positions of the blue lights that the *Mercury* had changed her course and was bearing away from him.

Despair seized him with almost a lion grasp.

His strength began deserting him.

His limbs seemed loth to perform their office, and it was only by a sheer effort of will that he kept above the surface.

"God help me," murmured Jack, feeling as if death's icy fingers were already on his brow. It is fearful, this being placed face to face with death, and feeling his ghastly, cold grasp, while your mind's eye pictures his hideous form.

All hope is gone.

There is a low, indistinct murmur as of asking pardon of a forgiving God—a few words softly spoken expressive of resignation, and he clasped his hands, prepared to meet the common enemy.

Feebler and feebler his feet move—they have ceased moving; slowly, slowly he commences sinking into the embrace of the water which has formed many a winding sheet.

But hark!

Wafted by the winds from afar off comes floating the low, indistinct sounds of a loud shout.

Starboard heard them.

His hands quickly parted, new life infused in them; he lay upon the water and strained every nerve.

Again the shout, and, though low and broken, it could be distinguished as:

"Aho, Starboard!"

He answered the hail, but his voice was weak and could not be heard by those in the jolly-boat.

But Providence kindly directed Meigs in the proper direction, and a few minutes later the hail was repeated, Jack's reply of:

"Aye—aye, boat aho!" reached the strained ears of the solicitous and watchful officer.

He could scarcely believe his senses, and repeated the hail, only to receive renewed assurances from Starboard, which reached the ears of the rest of those engaged in the work of rescue.

"He's found—he's found!" excitedly cried Meigs, jumping up and sitting down. "Bend to—bend to with a will, away—away, he is found!"

The oarsmen needed no urging, and the jolly-boat fairly spun through the water.

"Aho, Starboard!"

"Aye—aye!" replied Jack, whose voice began to grow fainter, which being observed by Meigs, brought forth a fresh injunction for greater speed.

"Where away?"

"Here," and the voice was fainter than before.

There was one good heavy pull, then another, then Meigs saw bobbing up and down on the waves a black object which he knew to be Jack's head.

"One more good stroke, boys," he cried, and leaning over the side of the boat he prepared to grasp the lad.

"Back water, quick," he cried, and at the same moment he dove his hand down into the water and seized Jack by the arm.

"Give me a hand, some one," said Meigs, excitedly.

Willing hands were laid on Jack; there was an upward pull, and Starboard lay faint and exhausted in the bottom of the jolly-boat.

"Saved!" was the one heartfelt word which Meigs uttered.

Then, as if with one accord, the oars were all dropped, and three rousing cheers of congratulation to the rescued lad arose.

"Back to the ship, boys, give way," said the officer, and it was with hearts gladdened at the successful issue of their search that they obeyed the order.

The *Mercury* was about a mile distant.

Taking a blue light, of which he had a quantity, Meigs lighted it. Its glare had hardly died away, when a response was seen from the ship, which immediately tacked and stood in the direction of our little party.

A few minutes sufficed to bring them within hailing distance, and as the man in the bow of the jolly-boat gave the call of "Ship-a-ahoy," she squared her sails and laid to.

It had hitherto been dark, which was now beginning to be dispelled by the moon, which was just rising above the horizon.

"Aye—aye," was the response to the hail.

As the jolly-boat, propelled by the lusty strokes of the elated oarsmen, neared the ship, a voice, the captain's, asked in a quavering, doubtful, fearing, yet hopeful tone:

"What success?"

The moonlight disclosed a scene of interest; clinging in the shrouds, hanging on the gunwales, anywhere, everywhere, from which the approaching small boat could be seen, were Jack's messmates and fellow students, and every one held his breath during the instant's silence that elapsed between the question of the captain and its answer by Meigs of:

"The best in the world."

"You found him?"

"Yes."

"And he is with you?"

"Yes."

"God be thanked!"

A murmur of joy passed from mouth to mouth, and as caps were whirled in air, a wild huzza was uttered.

Jack had been quietly resting, and by this time felt quite himself again.

The boat touched the ship's side.

A few minutes later he was standing on her deck.

"Starboard," said Captain Stafford, jocosely, now that the danger was past, "I see you still flourish."

"Yes, Starboard Jack still flourishes, despite the efforts to prevent it. And mark this," he sternly said, casting an eagle glance around the group, "you, the guilty one, Starboard Jack will yet track you down."

CHAPTER XV.

STARBOARD'S LUCKY STAR STANDS BY HIM—LOFTY PREPARES A BED OF THORNS FOR HIMSELF—THE DUPLICATE NOTES—A PIECE OF EAR SACRIFICED—THE BITTER BITTEN—BREWSTER GETS A DOSE—"WHOOH-LA! HURRA! GO IN!"—"BEAUTY UNADORNED," &c.—"DON'T CROSS STARBOARD JACK!"

LATE in the day there came a general order for all the students to assemble abaft the mainmast.

Starboard was sound on his pins again, and lively as a cricket, and responded to the summons.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Stafford, when order had been obtained, "you all know or can conjecture why you are gathered here. For a long time past practical jokes have been the order of the day. You, or a great many of you suffered first. Professors Lofty and Clawhammer have been victimized. First Officer Lake, and Scott, and even myself, I am inclined to think, have a common cause against the jokist. I have borne it long enough, and now intend that a stop shall be put to it. You all know the scandalous manner in which one of your officers was treated last night. The culprit deserves and shall be visited with punishment."

After more in the same strain, he commenced a sharp questioning, but Starboard Jack's lucky star was still in the ascendancy, and naught that was elicited inculpated him.

At length, thoroughly satisfied that the guilty party could not be found, Captain Stafford dismissed them, after making severe threats against the offender should he be caught in any more of his tricks.

Lofty, from having suffered at Jack's hands, was inclined to think him the perpetrator of the trick, and took the pains to pour his suspicions into the captain's ears.

The result was that he was summoned to the cabin, where he was taxed with its perpetration, and so sharply was he questioned that it required all his shrewdness to avoid committing himself.

By a slip of the tongue of the captain, Jack learned who it was that had directed suspicion towards himself, and as he passed out he bestowed a meaning look on Lofty, and muttered to himself:

"Whoop-la! you old bean-pole! but I'll make you dance for this, see if I don't!"

In the fore-castle that night, Long said to Jack:

"Well, old boy, you'll have to be a little careful how you cut up your didos now. The captain's on his muscle, so beware, for it'll be deuced hard on you if you're caught in *flagrante delicto*."

"Talk plain English in future, if you please," tartly said Jack. "As for being caught, I'll run the risk."

"What did they want you for in the cabin?"

"Lofty, the lop-sided son of a ring-tailed monkey, blowed on me!"

"Blowed on you?"

"Yes; told the old man I was just the fellow that would do such a thing."

"And the captain?"

"Sent for me," interrupted Jack, "and it was all I could do to allay his suspicions."

"And now what are you going to do?"

"What am I going to do?" repeated Jack, expressing astonishment. "Whoop-la! ask Starboard such a question as that. Why, pay him back of course."

"Be careful, Jack—be careful," said Long, warningly.

"So I shall be; but if I don't give him a dose, call me anything you please."

"Have you made up your mind to anything?"

"Yes; but don't talk any more, I want to go to sleep," and the conversation, which had been carried on in a whisper, concluded, both were soon fast asleep.

The next day Jack might have been seen in consultation with Patsy Hogan, and had he been closely watched might have been observed to hand to that individual two small folded pieces of paper.

As Professor Lofty turned over his plate, as he sat down to the table, a neatly-folded note struck his eye.

Judging that it was intended for his eye only, he carefully secured the same, without being observed by the others.

Clawhammer's experience was similar, as he, too, secured a note found beneath his plate, without being noticed by any one.

The meal over, Lofty speedily seized the opportunity of opening the note, which read:

"A bottle of brandy is concealed 'tween decks, at the foot of the foremast. By going there at exactly two bells past midnight you can get it. A FRIEND."

Clawhammer's note read the same, word for word, and those two worthies, unknown to each other, pondered over the matter, now suspecting a trick of some kind, and again, as an irresistible desire for a taste of the liquor seized them, determining at all hazards to make the venture.

Midnight, announced by the customary eight bells, at last arrived.

By intruding in Lofty's room, we can see him, clad in his long night-shirt, pacing restlessly to and fro.

Drawing aside the veil which hides that of Clawhammer, that person can be seen attired in the same airy style, fidgetting restlessly about.

One bell struck.

Lofty waited impatiently, and judging that two bells must be very close, he stepped from his room, and opening the door of the cabin, which admitted him 'tween decks, he stepped through it just as the expected and welcome two bells struck.

Hardly had its echo died away when Clawhammer tip-toed noiselessly through the same door.

Lofty cautiously pursued his course, unaware that he had a follower, who at the same time was ignorant of the fact that some one was preceding him.

Lofty, as he neared the foremast, peered in the darkness on both sides, but nothing of an alarming nature could be seen.

Arrived at the place designated in the note, he bent down and carefully felt around. At last his hand came into contact with the bottle. He clutched it eagerly, and giving a sign of satisfaction, drew back a step, and speedily uncorking the bottle, placed it to his lips. A disgusted exclamation, as a portion of its contents ran down his throat, was uttered just as Clawhammer came crawling up.

Neither saw the other, and Clawhammer, who had gotten down and was crawling around on his hands and knees in quest of the bottle, at this juncture ran his head between Lofty's legs. Lofty's back had been toward him, and when Clawhammer's shoulders struck his legs, they gave way, and he took a sudden seat in the center of the other's back, while the pepper-sauce with which Jack had filled the bottle, emptied some of its contents on Clawhammer's head, a portion of it reaching his eyes.

At this calamity Clawhammer sent up an unearthly yell, and starting up suddenly, dumped Lofty over backwards.

Both started to their feet.

They stood hesitating, afraid to stay, yet not having courage enough to run away.

Suddenly a pair of hands was placed on each of their backs, and as a "whoop-la!" was uttered in a low tone of voice, they were given a violent shove toward each other, which resulted in bringing their heads together with a resounding crack.

"W-o-o-w!" came a long howl from Clawhammer.

"Oh—oh—oh!" groaned Lofty, and with a determination to chastise the other, darted toward the white, dimly-outlined figure he saw just before him.

Clawhammer could not get out of the way, and so received the fierce onslaught of Lofty, by making a grasp at his head. But he found no hair, which informed him whom he was contending with. Lofty had not been so fortunate, and knew not his antagonist, but, determined to do or die, he clenched his fist and applied it energetically to Clawhammer's stomach. For an instant the latter gasped, and then with a long howl, he grabbed Lofty about the neck with both hands and drew him over. When close enough, he seized his ear between his teeth, and although Lofty screamed and yelled with pain, hung on with the tenacity of a bulldog.

Clawhammer knew that he had him at a disadvantage, and determined to pay a small grudge which had been existing between them for some time, and seizing Lofty's nose he pulled it heartily, each tweak being greeted with a yell of agony.

Lofty struggled violently to break from his antagonist's grasp, which he finally did at the expense of a piece of ear.

Clawhammer, as he felt his teeth meet, and became aware that a piece of human flesh was in his mouth, was very disgusted, and was seized with sudden qualms and violent retchings, which resulted in his unloading his stomach of a very unsavory mess, which happened just as Lofty, crazed with rage and pain, renewed the attack. The consequence was that the latter received the benefit of it.

Lofty stood dumbfounded, then he used scripture extensively in a profane manner, put himself in position, and made a dive at Clawhammer.

They clenched and fell.

The long night-shirt became entangled, and neither could rise, although Lofty was on top. Seizing an opportunity, he retaliated the ear business, by fixing his teeth firmly on either side of poor Clawhammer's nose, who alternately begged piteously for mercy, and then, forgetting all the moral precepts taught him when a theological student, would curse roundly at the biter.

The noise of the scuffle, and the yells and cries had drawn others to the spot, and among them, Sam Brewster, the sneak and would-be bully.

A light, whose gleams shone through the door, as the students bearing it approached, discovered Brewster to Jack, and he edged around until he occupied a position close behind him.

At last the dead-lock between the two professors was broken, and they regained their feet, and stood some few feet apart glaring at each other.

At last with a curse, Clawhammer made a rush at Lofty. Jack instantly gave Brewster a push, which sent him between the two combatants, and the result was, that each mistook him for the other, and both kicked, scratched, and bit him unmercifully.

Poor Brewster! He yelled—he begged—he called for help; but, alas, it did him no good, they only punned him the harder.

The light now appeared fuller on the scene, and then they discovered their mistake.

There was a mutual howl of disgust, and giving Brewster a simultaneous shove that landed him on his head in one of the replaced pots of mixed paints, they dashed at each other.

Ye sons of Jupiter! What a battle!

"Whoop-la! Hurrah! Go in—swing in—that's right, Jeremiah—give him another—now you've got him, Lofty—give him no quarter!" excitedly said Jack, who stood in a bent position, his hands on his knees, intently watching the fray. "Whoop-la! bully for you, Lofty—what a beauty!" he ecstatically said, as Clawhammer's fist dashed square in Lofty's mouth, demolishing his false teeth which fell in forty pieces.

"Bully! good! better!" he cried, as the sufferer retaliated, by planting a sockdologer between Clawhammer's eyes. "That was scientific—now—whoop-la! now, you've got him again," and he whirled around on his heel, and kicked his feet together as he jumped about in his excitement.

Then came one grand clench.

They swayed—they swung—they bent, twisted, squirmed, but neither obtained the mastery.

They had each other by the collar.

Captain Stafford, attracted by the infernal din, as he now approached, stopped, thunderstruck.

He would have spoken, but his voice failed him.

All stood, interested spectators of the scene.

For a moment the angry, maddened men stopped for breath, and then—oh! what a frail thing is muslin—they braced themselves and gave one simultaneous, convulsive jerk—sad to relate, the nightshirts, which were old and well-worn, suddenly gave way. Each descended to the deck with a bump which seemed almost hard enough to dislocate every bone in their bodies, each holding in his hands the remnants of the other's night-shirt, which, being the only article either wore, left them in a condition to prove the old aphorism of "beauty unadorned is adorned the most."

Even the captain's presence could not repress the shouts of merriment at the ludicrous spectacle the two professors presented sitting six or eight feet apart, an angry glare in their eyes, a pained and awful expression on their countenances, while each was endeavoring to caress his spinal column.

They arose, growled savagely, and started fiercely at each other again. Clawhammer still on the rampage, went for Lofty, heavy.

What the result might have been cannot be told, as Jack deftly put out his foot, over which Clawhammer tripped, and in falling, planked his head square in Lofty's stomach, placing the latter *hors du combat*, while the former was secured by the captain's order and marched off to the nursery, whither Lofty was soon after conducted.

Captain Stafford was more mystified than ever as to what agency could bring about these outrageous affairs, and returned to the cabin to ponder over the matter.

"Jack, you're a cuss," emphatically said Long, when they were out of earshot.

"Ain't I, though? Am I square with Lofty?"
 "I should say you were."
 "And Brewster?"
 "Poor fellow," said Long, in a commiserating tone.
 "Got a good dose. Whoop-la—all I say is—I am modest on it, too, don't cross Starboard Jack!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT EAR AGAIN—THE STORM—THE TWO UNFORTUNATES—SCOTT IN DANGER—THE RESCUE—ON A ROCK—LIFTED OFF—"THE SHIP'S LEAKING"—"MAN THE PUMPS"—AT SANTA CRUZ—PISTOL SHOTS—A LOVELY BURDEN.

DEEMING Clawhammer and Lofty sufficiently punished, Captain Stafford released them about ten o'clock in the forenoon, having first sent them their clothing.

Lofty knew that he had been tricked, but never dreamed that Clawhammer had come to the foot of the foremast for the same reason that he had.

And Clawhammer thought *vice versa*.

When Captain Stafford questioned them separately, they told him cock-and-bull stories, not caring to divulge the real nature of their errand.

He was shrewd enough to see that they were not speaking the truth, but he was obliged to accept what they said, nevertheless.

From that day forth the two professors were deadly enemies; and could either find a listener, he would spend hours pouring vituperation and invectives on the other's head.

And so this affair passed by, shrouded in the same mystery which had enveloped other happenings of the same character.

A derisive cheer greeted the professors as they appeared on deck that afternoon, for the purpose of hearing the recitations.

Lofty had his right ear bound up so that nothing could be seen of the mishap that occurred to it.

But Clawhammer's nose!

It was of enormous size.

Naturally large, the severe treatment that it had received had swollen it to twice its natural size, while a fiery glow lighted it up to that extent, that some one facetiously compared it to the headlight of a locomotive.

Neither of them would look at the other, and the various remarks which the more bold of the students made, concerning their personal appearance, generated an amount of anger that exhibited itself at the table.

They had sat down to dinner, and Lofty sullenly raised his plate and was turning it over, when an exclamation of disgust and a sudden dropping of the plate fixed all eyes on him, after which, following the look, they all saw something white and livid-looking directly in front of him.

Lofty gave a great gulp and turned his head.

The article that had caused his disgust was the piece of his ear which Clawhammer had spat out of his mouth, and which had afterwards been picked up by Jack, who caused Patsey to convey and place it beneath his plate.

The thought struck Lofty that Clawhammer had put it there, and with a desperate look in his eye, he suddenly turned about, seized a large chunk of salt beef, and flung it violently at the object of his suspicions, whom it took square between the eyes, and being of good weight and having force enough, it carried him over backward, bringing the back of his head on the cabin floor.

Not to be outdone, Clawhammer returned the compliment by sending a dish of potatoes, boiled onions, sea-bread, and a bottle of vinegar at the other's head.

Things were assuming appearances of a very lively time, when Captain Stafford applied his fist to the right eye of Clawhammer, while he administered a taste of leather to Lofty, which had the desired effect, since they both retired, one to try to reduce the swelling and black spot above his eye, while the other wished to ascertain the effect of a lotion on a bruise which a fleshy part of his anatomy had received.

Since leaving Cadiz they had skirted the coast southward, at a distance of from two to three hundred miles from shore.

Late one afternoon, near sundown, the captain and first officer Lake were to be seen in conversation on the poop.

The cause was plainly visible when Captain Stafford raised his finger, and pointed to where a long line of black clouds were rising above the horizon.

"There's a storm there, I'm afraid, Lake," said the captain.

"Surely there is," replied Lake.

"How's the barometer?"

"Falling rapidly."

"And the thermometer?"

"Rising."

"Ah! I thought so. Well, Mr. Lake, have all hands in readiness to reef, if necessary."

"Aye—aye, sir," replied Lake.

They stood there for some few moments in silence.

Meanwhile, the long, low line of black clouds had swelled, spread, and assumed gigantic proportions. The sun was speedily hidden from sight, and the wind that had been wafting them along, ceased, and the sails began flapping loosely against the masts.

A silence, almost death-like, ensued.

It began to grow dark.

Taking a glass, the captain gazed for a short while to the leeward, whence the clouds were rolling, and then, turning to his officer, said:

"It is a storm; I can see the first wave rolling this way."

By the aid of the glass, Lake also saw a long, black line on the surface of the water which he knew to be caused by the coming storm.

A light breeze struck the sails, and they bellied out.

A ripple approached, each moment growing larger.

"On deck," cried Lake.

"Aye—aye."

"Lay aloft—shorten sail. Take in all but the topsails—and close reef them."

"Aye—aye, sir," replied the officer in charge of the deck, transmitting the order to those beneath him.

"On deck," cried Lake again.

"Aye—aye."

"Run the life-line."

"Aye—aye," and several of the boys were soon busy running it.

The life-line as it is called, is a small rope run all about the deck just inside of the gunwales, which is always put in place when indications of a storm arise—it being used to prevent being carried overboard should a sea break over the vessel.

Everything was in readiness ere the storm reached them, and the vessel was laid in its track, Captain Stafford deeming it safest to scud before it.

A low, sullen roar could be heard, and it was almost as dark as midnight.

"We're in a bad place, I'm afraid, captain," said Lake, as he watched the approaching storm.

"That's only too true. There are numbers of sunken rocks in this locality, but we've no remedy, and must take our chances."

Jack had been near enough to overhear the captain's reply; as he walked away he softly muttered to himself:

"Whoop-la! And so we stand a chance of going to 'Kingdom Come,' do we? Well, I suppose it don't make much difference whether we go there now or later."

The storm struck them at last.

The spars bent as if they would snap in two, as its force struck the reefed sails. The wind whistled wildly through the rigging.

The *Mercury* fairly jumped under the impulse of this now very hurricane.

Onward they sped.

The waves were rolling mountains high, and at last one broke over the stern, and rushed up the deck.

Captain Stafford and Lake stood on the poop, holding fast to the safety line.

The waves were breaking over them from all directions.

"Hang on to the rope for your lives," suddenly cried the captain, through the speaking trumpet he held in his hand, the cry being occasioned by the sight of a huge wave, whose curling, crested top was towering far above them, and which he knew would break across them with almost irresistible force.

Two poor fellows, in no hurry to obey the injunction, for their carelessness forfeited their lives, for the weight of the waves carried away a portion of the starboard gunwale, and through this gap, borne by the huge volume of water, disappeared two of the crew, their blanched faces and despairing shrieks as they glided by, telling only too plainly how they realized the terrible death they were meeting.

Starboard was hanging to the safety line, near where the breach was formed, and he had seen the two unfortunates. He was endeavoring to work his way further back from this gap, when a loud shriek struck his ear. Glancing quickly about he saw Scott, who had imprudently let go the line, thinking to reach the poop ere the next wave broke, standing in the center of the deck, paralyzed apparently at sight of a wave that hung above them ready to break. Some one, taking in the peril of the situation, had uttered the shriek.

Starboard quickly retraced his steps toward the beach.

Scott made one or two ineffectual efforts to reach a place of safety, but terror rooted him to the spot.

All eyes were directed toward the apparently doomed man, and all waited in terrible suspense for the moment when he would be carried from their sight.

The maddened elements seemed to roar still louder as the breathless silence of those watchers became more silent.

The wave—beautiful with its foamy, crested top, hovers above them an instant, then as if shivered in a thousand fragments it falls, and rushes across the vessel toward the beach, picking up Scott and wafting him along as if of no more than feather weight.

One loud, agonized, prolonged shriek broke from Scott's lips, as his feet were knocked from under him, and he felt himself being carried irresistibly away.

There was a momentary pause as the water commenced rushing through the breach. That instant was seized by Starboard, and rushing forward, right in the seething, turbulent mass of water, while clinging still to the rope with his right hand, put out his left to his enemy. He was not close enough.

Jack's hand at last reached Scott's collar.

He struggled backward, with the water tugging wildly, madly at Scott's form, while he instantly expected to be taken from his own feet, perhaps swept away to meet the fate he was endeavoring to save another from.

God favors the brave!

Scott was saved.

There was no time for congratulation, as almost at that moment there came a sudden bump, a thud, and a violent lurch as the *Mercury* was brought to a standstill. The spars groaned, creaked—there was a crash, and the foremast was broken in twain.

"My God!" cried the captain, "what's the matter?"

"Struck a rock; it can't be anything else," replied the first officer, adding through his trumpet: "Take axes and clear away the wreck!"

Watching his opportunity, Jack dashed across the deck to the broken mast, and, seizing an axe, was soon plying it in a lusty manner.

The last rope that held it was cut, there was a grinding, grating noise, and the top was gone, leaving but a stump, where, but a few moments before, a tall and graceful spar had stood.

Meanwhile, the *Mercury* was bumping and jumping wildly up and down as each successive wave would lift her only to let her fall back heavily.

"My God! we can't stand this long," said Captain Stafford. "Without divine aid, we are all doomed to—"

He did not finish, for a wave, gigantic in size, seized the *Mercury*, lifted her clear off the rock, and they were once more scudding before the storm.

Hardly ten minutes later came the news, "the ship's leaking badly!"

And so it was. A hole had probably been knocked in her bottom, and the water was rapidly rising in the hold.

"Man the pumps!" was the order, and through the long hours of the night did these boys work faithfully and well.

At daylight the storm began to abate, and ended in the same abrupt manner in which it had come, and the sun arose in almost a clear sky.

Slowly, but surely, the pumps gained a mastery over the water, and late in the afternoon she was so near clear that the carpenter succeeded in finding and stopping up several small holes.

Captain Stafford, after making a calculation, and finding himself within several hundred miles of the Canary Islands, determined to run into Santa Cruz for repairs, the run there being accomplished safely.

They arrived there in the morning, and Jack, who, since saving Scott's life, stood high again in Captain Stafford's favor, after asking permission for himself and Long to go ashore, which was granted, took one of the boats and they rowed ashore.

It was about three o'clock when they walked up one of the wide streets of Santa Cruz, and surveyed with curiosity the low, squat-looking buildings, which, being each and every one of them of a pure white, made them of peculiar interest to our boys.

They were to report on board at least by midnight.

Knowing that Santa Cruz was famed for its wine, as night approached they visited a neat, clean-looking little saloon, where they had some refreshments inclusive of a light-colored and pleasant-tasting wine.

They remained here until about eleven o'clock, when, thinking it time to turn their footsteps homeward, or rather shipward, they left the place.

About half the distance to the shore had been accomplished, when the stillness of the night was broken by the sharp crack of the pistol, and a shrill cry, uttered in a feminine voice, for help.

"Come on, Long," said Jack, and off he darted in the direction whence the sounds had come.

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack, drawing his pistol, as quickly turning a corner, the outlines of a group composed of three men and a woman struck his eye. "Whoop-la! now for them!"

Two of the men, hearing sounds of footsteps, desisted from what was evidently a work of pillage, and, angry at the interruption, drew their pistols, and as they ran, stopped to fire several shots at Jack and Long.

The third gentleman was lying on the ground.

The lady had been standing, but as Jack approached she would have fallen had not he opportunely caught her in his arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. AND MISS SEWALL—THEY SEE A FIGURE AND GIVE IT CHASE—"WHOOPLA! A MONKEY, AS I LIVE!"—STARBOARD GETS CALLED AN "EEJIT"—SNOWBALL'S ENCOUNTER WITH HIS SATANIC MAJESTY.

STARBOARD, in holding the lovely being who had fainted in his arms, found himself in a novel position, one he had never experienced before.

The man whom Jack and Long had seen prostrate as they approached, with Long's assistance, rose to his feet, and coming forward, relieved Jack; at the same time saying:

"She is my daughter."

Without a word Jack gave her up.

A few moments later a sigh escaped her lips; she stirred a little in her father's arms, and then opened her eyes.

She seemed slightly dazed at first, and then as memory called back the scene of a short while before, she started, and then anxiously asked:

"Dear, dear father, are you hurt?"

"Not much—how do you feel?"

"Well again," replied she, leaving go her hold of him. "But, papa, these gentlemen."

"True; I had forgotten," and then turning to the chums, he said: "Please excuse my tardiness in returning thanks for the signal service you have rendered us. Had it not been for your timely intervention, there is no knowing what might have happened. I thank you for myself, and I am sure that Elsie feels as grateful to—"

"Excuse me," interposed Jack, "but we wish no thanks for what we did, and if there is anything further we can do, please command us."

"Gentlemen, you are far too modest; you should allow me to—"

"Excuse me again," interrupted Jack. "May we have the pleasure of seeing you safely home?"

"I thank you and will accept your kind offer, as I am totally unprotected, having left my revolvers at the house."

On the way Jack learned that the gentleman's name was William Sewall, that he was a New Yorker who had come to Santa Cruz to recruit his health; being accompanied by his motherless and only child, his daughter Elsie.

In return, Jack informed Mr. Sewall that they belonged to the school-ship *Mercury*, and of the circumstances that had led to their arrival in time to frighten off the ruffians who would have robbed, perhaps murdered him.

After having repeatedly thanked them, Mr. Sewall allowed them to go, after they had refused to shelter themselves beneath his roof for the night.

He, however, extracted from both a promise that they would pay him a visit before the ship left the harbor.

On the way to where they had left the boat, Starboard saw just before them a dark figure.

He drew his pistol, then quickened his pace, but the figure, which seemed to progress in a jerky, bounding way, kept about the same distance ahead.

"Stop!" cried Starboard; but the figure kept serenely on its way.

"What is it, Jack?" asked Long. "It can't be a man; it's too small."

"That's what bothers me," replied Jack. "It can't be a man; come along, George, keep close."

Starboard broke into a run, followed closely by Long.

The figure, as the noise of running feet was heard, quickened its pace—or rather bound—and seemed to remain as far ahead as ever.

Starboard was puzzled.

Finally the figure bounded around a corner.

It was out of their course to follow it, but Jack's curiosity was aroused, and without hesitation he determined to follow, until he gained a solution of the mystery.

He increased his speed and could see that he was gaining.

With a dash he caught up, and stooping a little, then clasped the figure and discovered that he had a monkey in his hands.

"Whoop-la, a monkey, as I live," he cried. "Hey, you little cuss, what are you doing?" he quickly added, as his monkeyship, not relishing the handling he was receiving, closed his teeth on Jack's arm.

A cuff or two, and the monkey released his hold and cowered in fear.

"What's the matter?" questioned Long.

"The little imp bit me."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Take him aboard—wouldn't you?"

"Just as you say."

"We may have some fun with him—but come on, we ought to be on board before this time."

It was past midnight when they stepped on deck, where they were stopped by the officer on duty, who informed them that they were to report to the captain in the morning the reason of staying ashore beyond the granted time.

"All right," replied Jack. "Come on, Long, let's go and turn in."

Starboard held the monkey under his arm as they went forward toward the forecabin.

As they approached the foremast a groan caught their attention.

They stopped and presently saw the burly form of the cabin waiter, Snowball, appear in sight.

He walked in a bent up position, and one capacious hand was spread out on his stomach, while an occasional groan escaped his thick lips.

"What's the matter, Snowball?" asked Jack, in a sympathizing tone.

The only reply was a groan, deeper than the one that had preceded it.

"What did you say it was?" asked Jack.

"Oh! you luf me lone, you eejit," replied Snowball, whose attack of stomach-ache had brought on a fit of ill-temper.

"Phew!" whistled Starboard, "do you hear that, Long? He calls me an idiot. Whoop-la! I'll fix you, you black mountain of flesh."

"Whoop-la! an idiot is it? I'm afraid you'll think so before you get done with me. An idiot? You'll think I'm the devil himself."

Snowball, as are almost all negroes, was eminently superstitious, and as the name of his satanic majesty struck his ear, he started suddenly, and, probably superinduced by the thoughts he may have had of being carried off by his stomach-ache to meet that personage, wheeled quickly around as if half expecting to see him at his elbow.

As his back was turned, Jack seized the monkey and threw it at Snowball, and as the animal struck the darkey's head and fastened his paws in the wool, a long howl of terror escaped his lips.

The stomach-ache was all forgotten.

Snowball thought the devil had got him.

For an instant he stood speechless, his teeth chattering like a castanet, then falling on his knees, he began praying—

"Oh! debbil—good debbil—please let dis darkey go foah dis yer time—good debbil—mister debbil—please do—only foah dis—uh—uh—w-o-w—," as Jack broke in with—"you must go along now," which the monkey had seconded by emphatically pulling his wool.

Snowball bounded to his feet, and shouting, "I won't go—I won't go," commenced a run up and down the waist, dodging behind the mainmast, water-casks, etc.

The monkey had all he could do to retain his seat, but he evidently enjoyed it, for at each howl he extracted from the negro, he laid himself out to produce another, which was accomplished by a hearty tug at his wool, and an unintelligible chatter, which poor Snowball mistook for the language of the infernal regions.

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack. "Long, isn't that monkey a beauty? Go in, monkey, I'll bet odds on you."

Attracted by the infernal din and yells the students began pouring on deck to see the negro bounding here, there and everywhere, still keeping up his yell of—"I won't go—I won't go."

Standing outside of the scullery door was a barrel used for slops, which was about empty.

In his race Snowball passed it, and for some cause, instead of pursuing his course straight ahead, he commenced backing down.

He struck the barrel, sat on its chine a second, and then doubling up, shot down it, until finally only his head and feet were visible above the top.

The monkey finding his victim motionless, let go his hold, and scampered across the deck and up the rigging.

Meanwhile Snowball kept up an awful racket, and in his struggles to release himself upset the barrel, which from the inclination of the deck started off toward the scuppers, at each revolution thwacking his head on the deck.

"Help—help—foah de Lord's sake!" gasped Snowball, as his cranium received a harder knock than usual.

Finally the barrel struck the gunwale and stopped, when, more dead than alive, Snowball was drawn from his uncomfortable position, all covered with the refuse of the scullery.

They had all seen the monkey scampering across the deck, and when they understood that Snowball thought it was the devil, a hearty laugh was had at his expense, during which he slunk away, fully convinced in his own mind that he had a personal encounter with the imp of darkness.

The next morning, as ordered, Starboard reported to the captain, who, when he became aware of the circumstances that had detained them, forgave the disobedience, and furthermore, gave them both permission to go ashore every day during their stay in port, and commissioned Jack, in his own name to invite Mr. and Miss Sewall to make them a visit on board the *Mercury*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CALL ON MR. SEWALL—JACK IN THE SALOON—THE LANDLORD'S WARNING—JACK BEFRIENDS THE ROBBER CHIEFTAIN—A HUNTING EXPEDITION—"JALAP, BY THUNDER!"—SURPRISE—THE FIGHT NEAR TO DEATH—HIS ANTAGONIST SHOT—THE ROBBERS' ENCAMPMENT—THE STEW, AND JALAP—HOME AGAIN.

TAKING advantage of Captain Stafford's permission to go ashore every day, they that very afternoon lowered the dingy and pulled in shore.

They immediately repaired to the house of Mr. Sewall to make inquiries concerning their recovery from the effects of the previous night.

They were shown into the little parlor of the house, where they were soon joined by Mr. Sewall and his daughter.

After paying his compliments, Jack delivered the captain's invitation, which was immediately accepted, and one was sent in return, inviting the captain and our two boys to come and take dinner with him.

After a call of an hour's length, they left, after promising to call on them again before they left port.

"Which way, Jack?" asked Long, after they were outside the house.

"I think I'll take a stroll along the beach. Which way are you bound?"

"Back—inland, I guess."

"All right; then we part here."

"Yes. Where shall I hail you when time's up to go back?"

"Oh, heave anchor in the saloon where we were last night," replied Jack, and with this understanding they separated.

After wandering about for a few hours, Jack, just about sunset, wended his way up the gently sloping hill to the village, or town, as it is perhaps more proper to call it, and finally halted before the door of the little saloon he had visited on the previous night.

From having intercourse with English-speaking people the landlord had gained a considerable knowledge of the language, and, in not badly-spoken English, invited Jack inside.

There was not much doing, and the landlord entered freely into conversation with Jack, during which he intimated that had heard of the bravery which he and his companion had shown.

Starboard was surprised, and asked:

"Who told you of it?"

In substance the reply was that Mr. Sewall had reported the fact to the officers of the law, and that it had leaked out through them, and when he had given the required information he hesitated a minute or two, and then, laying his finger on his lip to indicate caution, he bent forward and whispered:

"Vile you is here, better be careful."

"What of?"

"De robber—bandit."

"Robber—bandit—pah! What harm can they do me? None," replied Starboard, contemptuously.

"Ah! no talk dat way—bad—very bad. De robber near you, und"—he shook his head warningly.

By a great deal of questioning, Starboard learned that some few miles in the interior was a rendezvous of a gang of bandits, who had their fastness among the hills, laying tribute on all those near them, and occasionally making incursions into the towns themselves.

Now and then, one of the gang would be seen to walk boldly through Santa Cruz, unmolested by any of the officers of the law.

But that very afternoon, Sancho Calcagnino, the captain of the cut-throat crew, had been seen in the streets, as if braving arrest.

Mr. Sewall hearing of this shortly after the two friends left, went to the authorities, and being an influential man, and through offering a large reward, finally induced two of the officers to make an attempt at capturing the bandit, which they hoped to do successfully, as for a sum of money in hand paid, Gomez, the only follower Sancho had with him, agreed to betray his master, and help to secure him.

This much Jack learned from the landlord, who was called away just as he finished, leaving Starboard alone in the room.

Suddenly sounds of a scuffle, followed by several pistol-shots, apparently close at hand, struck his ear, all being intermingled with imprecations and oaths, some of which he understood, some not.

Then he heard hasty footsteps in the long stone-paved hall, and but a second or two later a tall, well-built and handsome but fierce-looking man came bounding into the room.

At first he did not perceive Starboard, but when he did, a horrible oath, spoken in tolerable English burst from his lips, and like a flash his pistol was drawn from its holster, and Jack instantly covered by it.

"Hold," cried Jack, "what would you do?"

"Kill you," hissed the man.

"What for? I know you—you are Sancho—somebody is after you—there—they are coming now—get behind that door and I'll send them another way."

Sancho gazed earnestly at Jack a moment, then concealed himself behind the door.

The two officers came up puffing and blowing, and addressed themselves to Jack in a language he did not understand, but at last comprehending the import of what they were breathlessly saying, pointed up the hall, at the end of which a window stood open.

As soon as they were gone, Jack left the doorway in which he had been standing, and immediately put out the light which had been dimly burning, then throwing up a window that opened in an opposite direction to that which the officers had taken, he said one word.

"Go."

Sancho needed no second bidding, but bounded through it, and once in the darkness it was no very difficult task to elude his pursuers.

Jack, on going into the room which was used in common, learned the particulars from the landlord, which were, that the officers and Gomez had met Sancho in front of the saloon.

That they had tried to capture him, and that Gomez had paid for his treachery with his life, as Sancho, recognizing his follower's voice, instantly put a bullet through his brain.

The officers held back a few moments dismayed, and it was this halt that gave time for the scene between Starboard and Sancho.

Long turned up a short time later, and they soon returned to the ship.

The next morning Long proposed a hunting excursion, and Jack, remembering the days of old when he went gunning, immediately and eagerly accepted the proposition, provided they could obtain regular fowling pieces, which the captain fortunately had; so when the sun was only a few hours high they started for shore with the dingey. Before leaving the ship Jack visited a spot where he had a number of bottles stored, among them one of brandy, selecting which he placed it in his pocket, thinking an occasion might arise in which it might be handy to have along.

To avoid observation as much as possible, they landed about a mile west of the town and struck straight back for the hills, which lay about two miles distant.

After reaching them they were doomed to disappointment, for hunt as they would, nothing worthy of powder and shot could they scare up.

Somewhat disgusted, they at last sat down to discuss a lunch which they had brought with them.

Jack drew out his bottle and passed it to Long, who immediately spat out the mouthful he took of the contents.

"What's the matter?" asked Jack.

"Taste of it," replied Long.

Starboard placed the bottle to his lips, cautiously tasted its contents, and then with a comical and amused expression, he cried:

"Whoop-la! Jalap, by thunder!"

He had just placed the cork in the bottle when a sudden exclamation from Long caused him to glance hastily up, to behold a dozen or more of rough-looking fellows surrounding them.

He made a spring for his gun, but one of the gang was ahead of him. His hand jumped for his pistols, but for once Jack had been negligent, and had forgotten to bring them with him.

"Sail in, Long," cried Jack. "Break through and run for it, it's the only chance we have."

"Whoop-la! get out of my way you black-faced son of Beelzebub—whoop-la!" and he attacked the fellow who barred his way so fiercely that he involuntarily gave way.

"Whoop-la! take that," cried Jack, and bounding forward he gave the fellow a blow straight out from the shoulder, which sent him to grass.

They were in the heart of the woods, and Jack knew that any cries for help would be futile, so as the man fell before his stroke, he bounded over the prostrate body, and would have dashed off, but unfortunately a projecting rock caught his toe, and he fell heavily. In an instant he was on his feet again, facing the man he had knocked down, who now, livid with rage, made for Jack, with an uplifted hand which held a long and keen dagger. He made a pass at Jack, which was avoided by a nimble jump to one side. At length he put the knife between his teeth and drew a pistol.

It covered Jack, and he knew it. With a cat-like agility he jumped to the man's side, and threw the pistol around just in time to send the bullet through the fleshy part of his leg.

The wounded man became a veritable madman, and growling fearfully he caught hold of Starboard.

They locked, and then ensued a wild struggle for supremacy.

Jack, although not near as large or as strong as his antagonist, made up what he lacked in bulk and sinew by his agility, and for a long while it was a doubtful question as to the issue of the struggle.

At last Jack was thrown heavily to the ground, his head and shoulders striking on a rock, partially stunning him. It required but an instant to remember his situation, and he struggled to get up, but his antagonist at that moment placed a knee on his breast, and his left hand on Jack's throat, thus holding him as in a vise. The grasp on his throat began tightening—his breath came hard, and he began to gasp. He glanced at his antagonist, who, seizing the knife he had been holding between his teeth, in his right hand, raised it on high.

A tremor swept over Jack's frame.

The cold sweat started from every pore.

Everything began to grow dark.

He choked—gasped.

He closed his eyes, expecting that each sound would be his last.

The commanding voice that cried "stop," he heard not, consciousness was too near gone.

There was a sharp report, he quivered as he felt the warm blood spurt over him.

Jack at first thought it was his own, but the relaxation of the grasp on his throat, and the weight of his antagonist's body as it fell on him, as well as the metallic jingle of the dagger as it struck the rock, informed him that his life had been saved.

But by whom?

Throwing off the body of his late antagonist, from a hole in whose breast the blood was gushing, Jack staggered to his feet, to behold Long standing a few feet distant with his arms pinioned behind his back.

Standing near him, with a still smoking pistol, was the robber captain, Sancho Calcagnino.

The robber chief had not been present at the opening of the fray; but arriving and recognizing the imminence of the danger in which Jack was placed, and finding his command to stop disobeyed, his trusty pistol had sent a leaden messenger which saved Starboard's life, at the expense of one of his followers.

Thus did Sancho pay the debt of gratitude he owed our hero.

A brother of the man Sancho had killed, as he saw the deed enacted, uttered a cry of rage and defiance, and drawing his pistol, prepared to avenge his brother's untimely death. But Sancho was not to be taken unawares, and seeing the action, commanded that he put his pistol away.

The man did not obey.

"Put it away!" commanded Sancho.

"I won't!" returned the other.

"Do you question my authority?" demanded Sancho, his coal-black eyes lighting up with a lurid glow.

"Yes."

That word was his last, for, as quick as lightning, Sancho's trusty pistol and unerring aim sent him to keep his murdered brother company.

"Does any one else question my authority?" he fiercely asked, his burning eyes scanning the face of every man in the group.

"No—no—no," came the low answer from each and every one of them.

"Tis well," he replied, grimly, returning his pistol to the holster.

Kindly but firmly he informed the lads that they must bear him company, and after allowing them to get their guns, he walked along with them.

From the drift of his conversation, Jack saw that Sancho had determined that they should become members of the gang, and he made up his mind that they would not.

After getting away back in the hills, in a valley, where there was a sort of encampment, a fire was built, and a large pot was seen steaming above it. Jack peered into it, and seeing that it contained a sort of stew, slyly emptied into it the bottle of jalap, he having picked it up after the battle was over.

Jack gave Long an idea of what might be expected, and both refrained from eating any of the stew, which, indeed, was savory and appetizing in smell.

All the robbers partook freely of it, and it was not long before first one and then another could be seen clasping a hand on his stomach in mortal agony, after which he would hurry away.

It did not take a great while before all were in this state, and such a wailing and cursing, and gnashing of teeth as the strong dose of jalap gripped them with giant force, was never heard before or since.

Now was their opportunity, and shouldering their guns—after providing themselves each with a brace of revolvers, taken from a couple of men, who, weak and spent, were rolling around in agony—they started in the direction whence they had come, and not long after sundown they were once more treading the decks of the *Mercury*, not much the worse for the day's hunting.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOME CLOTHES THAT WERE TIED IN KNOTS—MR. GAUNT, WIFE AND BABY ON BOARD, AS WELL AS TWO GOATS—THE BILLY GOAT ON THE RAMPAGE—THE ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE HIM—A PLOT AGAINST STARBOARD—"YOU ARE A LIAR."

STARBOARD and Long had determined to keep their adventure to themselves; but being overheard when speaking of it the next morning, necessitated its relation in full.

There was some laughter at their expense, and numerous jokes relating to the game they had come across, and, somewhat chafed, Jack warningly said:

"Gentlemen, I owe you one now, and I will take this into account, also. Vengeance shall be mine, whoop-la! just remember it."

And vengeance he had, for when the cry came for those below deck to tumble out the next morning, divers vexed inquiries might have been heard, such as:

"Billy, do you know where my pants are?"

"Have you seen my coat?"

"Where's my shoes?" etc., etc., going through the whole catalogue of wearing apparel.

"Some more devilish nonsense, I'll swear," said one irritated individual.

"Another joke," growled some one else.

"Get the light," said another.

The light was taken from its position, and a strict search at last discovered a heterogeneous pile, in an out of the way corner.

The spot immediately became a center of attraction, and as the pile was overhauled and every pair of pants, every coat, and all the socks were discovered tied in hard knots, it developed an astonishing amount of profanity.

"There's mine," said an individual as he recognized a pair of pants which were held up to view, and taking them he seated himself cross-legged and commenced industriously chewing at one of the knots.

"And them's mine."

"Let me have that pair."

"And me, that."

"Curse the fellow who done this," growled the first one, trying to secure his nether garment.

"So say I," chimed in another individual who was experiencing a like difficulty in getting his pants in a wearable condition.

Five or ten minutes sufficed to assort all the garments, and Starboard Jack, from his hiding-place, nearly burst his sides laughing, at the ludicrous scene which was presented.

Poor Long!

Jack had not spared even him, and that individual, with a grave face, which was as long as that of an ordinary Methodist minister, was silently tugging at a knot with both hands and his teeth.

"Turn out down there—turn out—lively," cried the officer above.

Five minutes of this wholesome exercise and an impatient voice peremptorily ordered the students on deck.

It was still dark in the fore-castle, but was light on deck, so when the boys, who dared not disobey this command, filled slowly on deck with their clothing beneath their arms, it was to present a display of bare limbs and lugubrious faces to those on deck.

For some moments Lieutenant Lake stood speechless in his amazement at this strange scene, and then summoning Sam Brewster, questioned him regarding the matter.

Since Starboard's turning the tables on him, he had stood in awe of him, and although he laid this affair to Jack, dared not mention the fact.

It took some of them an hour or more to restore their clothing to its proper shape, so well had Jack done the job, and could all the curses which were uttered for his benefit have rested on him, it would be dreadful to even, contemplate for an instant the horrible position he would have been in.

That day Captain Stafford, Starboard and Long dined with the Sewall's, who then agreed to return the compliment by dining the next day on board the *Mercury*.

The next day, Friday, according to appointment, Mr. and Miss Sewall met the long boat on the dock, and were shortly afterwards in the *Mercury's* cabin.

Dinner passed off without anything occurring to mar its pleasure.

During the afternoon it transpired that Mr. Sewall asked Captain Stafford where he intended stopping after leaving Santa Cruz, and learning that it would be at Sierra Leone, immediately interceded for passage for a poor but worthy and hardworking missionary, his wife and child, who wished to be conveyed to that very point.

After some hesitation the captain agreed to take them with him.

The very next day, Saturday, the missionary, who was a tall, gaunt personage, accompanied by his wife, who was a little, delicate-looking woman, who carried a baby of a few months old in her arms, came on board.

They were received kindly by Captain Stafford, who was somewhat dismayed, however, to shortly afterward see some things come on board, and among them a couple of goats, a billy and a nanny.

At first he objected to the animals coming on board, but when he learned that they were necessary to the child's existence, the mother being too weak to nurse it, he determined to make the best of a bad bargain, and caused a pen to be constructed near the fore spar-deck for their goatships.

Everything had been done that was necessary on board the *Mercury*,

and being in a sea-going condition again, the captain gave out the information that on Monday they would leave port.

On Sunday morning, Mr. Gaunt, the missionary, preached a short sermon to the students, who were summoned to listen to the discourse.

Mr. and Miss Sewall came on board during the afternoon, and just before sunset, the crew were piped together again beneath the mainmast, to listen to another religious exhortation by Mr. Gaunt.

Having finished his discourse, Mr. Gaunt said:

"Let us pray," and all knelt down, and the missionary began pouring forth a fervent petition, during which Jack heard a clatter of boards and the pat of feet, and glancing about, saw that Mr. Billygoat had escaped from his pen, and was coming towards the group, occasionally cavorting and shaking his head in a rambunctious manner.

Mr. Gaunt's black, ministerial clothing was well worn, and was patched here and there, and as the breeze opened the tails of the frock coat he wore, it displayed a rather highly colored patch in the seat of his unmentionables, as modesty at this time bids me write it.

Now, whether the goat had ever seen that patch before or not is an open question, but certainly it never struck his attention as forcibly as it did now. He shook his head, glanced around, winked knowingly, then started, stopped as if for reflection, started—stopped.

Jack occupied a position in the rear, a little to one side of Mr. Gaunt, and as he saw the indecision of his goatship, he irritated him by swinging his cap toward him, and making aggressive movements with his hand, being careful to keep both cap and hand in a line with Mr. Gaunt's patched trowsers.

That goat wasn't going to stand any such nonsense, and as Mr. Gaunt uttered the words:

"Oh-oh-oh—please send us an overwhelming, an irresistible shock!" the goat gave one long, defiant "ba-a-a" and charged the patch. Mr. Gaunt received the shock he was praying for, and he scudded along the deck; his head brought up against that of Professor Clawhammer, who had become very devout since the missionary's advent on board.

A long howl of anguish was uttered by both, which drew all eyes on them, just in time to see the goat go for that offending patch again, this time lifting Mr. Gaunt forward, and planting his head violently in Professor Lofty's stomach.

"Curse the goat!" yelled Lofty, gasping for breath.

"The Lord deliver us!" groaned the missionary.

"Catch the goat!" cried the captain.

"Ba-a-a!" came the defiant answer, and lowering his head, the goat started for the patch again, and succeeded in bearing part of it away on his horns as a trophy, while the tips of his horns being of a red color, convinced the others of what Mr. Gaunt fully realized, that the flesh had been prodded.

"Save me," he gasped, as he received another butt that landed him on the top of Lake, who had fallen in attempting to help Gaunt.

They attempted to capture the goat, but it was condensing a whirlwind in a tea-kettle.

Captain Stafford himself took a hand in, and placed himself directly in the goat's way as he came bounding up the deck. The result was that as the goat bounded between his legs, it carried him off his pins, and a bloody nose and a pair of black eyes were the consequences.

Scott attempted to stop his wild career.

Result—a stomach-ache for two weeks afterwards.

Sam Brewster emulated Scott's example, and had a couple of teeth knocked out, as he brought up violently against the corner of a box.

Altogether things were as lively as one could wish.

But at last the goat was secured and returned to his quarters, which were made so secure as to prevent any possibility of a future escape.

None dreamed that the goat had received any urging, and Jack quietly enjoyed his laugh at the expense of the goat's victims.

The good-bys were all spoken late in the evening, and as the first faint streaks that ushered in Monday morning appeared on the horizon, anchor was weighed, and they stood out of the harbor.

A day or two later, Scott and Jack became engaged in a dispute which, resulting disadvantageously to the former, put him in a great rage, and he resolved to make another attempt to destroy Jack's standing and character, and took Brewster and Bell, another sneak, into his confidence.

In discussing the matter they were so incautious as to allow an inkling of it to reach other ears, and Jack was consequently on the alert for anything of a suspicious character.

A well-laid plot was planned, and one morning Jack found himself summoned to appear before Captain Stafford, abaft the mainmast, about which nearly all on board were gathered.

"I am here, sir," said Jack, stepping up and doffing his cap.

"So I see. Starboard, there is a serious charge against you."

"What is it?"

"Mr. Gaunt has been robbed."

"What then?"

"You are accused of doing it."

"By whom?"

"By me," interrupted Scott, stepping forward and laying his hand in a mock-ceremonious style on his breast.

"So you say that I robbed Mr. Gaunt, do you?" said Jack, sternly, eyeing Scott fixedly the while.

"I do," replied Scott.

"Well," said Jack, in a cool, clear and piercing voice, "Let me tell you that you are a liar."

"A liar?" ejaculated Scott.

"Yes, and a thief, and I can prove it," replied Jack, his tone and manner causing his accuser to cringe.

"Prove it, then," said Scott, in a voice that quavered, despite his efforts to control it.

"I will."

CHAPTER XX.

SCOTT AND HIS WITNESSES—STARBOARD CROSS-QUESTIONS THEM—PROVES HIS INNOCENCE—THE SENTENCE OF THE CONSPIRATORS—A SHAKE HANDS WITH CAPTAIN STAFFORD—THE CONGRATULATIONS—A DEFINITION OF RELIGION.

EVERYBODY was on tiptoe with anxiety, and listened breathlessly to the recriminations which Starboard Jack poured on Scott.

Something in his manner caused misgivings to arise in Scott's breast, and he fairly quaked with fear as Jack's clear response of "I will prove your guilt," rang out.

Assuming a bold front and a sneering tone, he replied:

"Prove it then, and don't be all night about it?"

"Easy, gentlemen," interposed the captain, and then addressing Scott, he said, "you, I believe, made a charge against Starboard?"

"I did."

"Then it is for you to prove him guilty. We will try this case in the customary way."

After selecting a jury of twelve of the students, Scott called as a witness against Jack, the low-lived sneak, Sam Brewster.

"Well, Mr. Brewster, tell your story," said Captain Stafford. "Let's hear what you have to say."

"Well, sir, all I've got to say is this, that last night in the late dog-watch, after dark you know, I was in the fore-castle when I saw Starboard Jack come down. He acted kinder 'spicious like, and I kept my eyes on him. He first looked around and then walked over to his chest. Then he took something from his pocket that looked like a purse, or something of that kind, which I thought it was because I heard a chink such as coin would make. This he put away in his chest, and then went on deck again. That is all, sir."

Brewster would have moved away, but Jack's voice rang out clear and loud the one word:

"Stop!"

Involuntarily Brewster obeyed.

"Look at me," commanded Jack.

In vain he strove to do so. He could not help quailing before Jack's stern gaze that seemed to pierce his inmost soul, and he read his very thoughts.

"Listen to me and answer my questions," said Jack, in an imperious, slow, and impressive tone of manner. "Do you state understandingly that this occurred in the late dog-watch?"

"I do," was the quavering reply.

"About what portion of it did you see me in the fore-castle?"

Brewster hesitated, cast a surreptitious, imploring glance at Scott which Jack did not fail to observe.

"Was it about four, five, six, or seven bells?" asked Jack. "Answer the question."

Brewster turned to Scott as if for aid, but that individual stood dumb, as the captain's eyes were fastened on him.

At last, with a trembling voice, he replied:

"About five bells, I think."

"Might it not have been earlier?"

"Y—e—s—I don't know—it might have been."

"It wasn't any later, anyhow?"

"N—n—no," was the hesitating reply.

"You may go," said Jack, and Brewster stepped away much relieved.

"You will please remember," said Jack, turning to the captain, "that I was with you in the cabin until after six bells."

The captain nodded assent, and another witness was called forward, who corroborated Brewster's statements, after which Scott advanced and said, as follows:

"In the first place, I wish to state that I don't do this out of malice; but with a desire to do justice to my worthy friend, Mr. Gaunt, who can ill afford losing the few dollars he possesses."

"Very well, go on with your story," impatiently replied Captain Stafford.

By way of explanation, it is necessary here to state, that on the evening previous, during the late dog-watch, Jack had been summoned to the cabin by the captain, it having transpired that Jack had been caught in one of his jokes, for which Captain Stafford undertook to reprimand him.

During the time he was in the cabin, Scott came in and crossed to his own room, presumably to turn in.

After a moment's clearing of his throat by hemming and hawing, which looked much as if he wished to collect his thoughts, he began.

"Last night while you and Starboard were in the cabin, I came in and passed to my room. A few minutes later you arose and went into your own room, telling Jack you would be gone perhaps ten minutes. I wished to get a drink of water, and opened my door, but stopped as I saw Jack stealing softly toward Mr. Gaunt's door. He entered his room, and in a few minutes came back holding something in his hand which he concealed just before you joined him. When I heard that Mr. Gaunt had been robbed, I knew instantly who the thief was, and mentioned it to Brewster, who also happened to witness its concealment. That is all."

The story was told in such a straightforward manner, and seemed so plausible, that even Captain Stafford was fain to wholly disbelieve it.

"That is not all," said Jack. "I want to question you, too."

"Fire away."

"You do not think you could be mistaken about the fact of seeing me enter Mr. Gaunt's room?"

"No."

"You are positive?"

"Yes."

"Would swear to it?"

"Willingly."

"Enough. Have you any more witnesses?"

"Yes—your chest."

The chest was sent for, and in one corner was found a purse containing some gold and silver coin which Mr. Gaunt identified as his property.

So far everything seemed to prove Jack the culprit, and pitying words and looks of commiseration could be seen passing from face to face and mouth to mouth of Jack's friends.

"And now, Starboard, what have you to offer in defense?" asked Captain Stafford, in a cold tone, which showed that he held the belief that our hero was guilty.

"Well, sir, I should like to ask you a few questions."

"I am prepared to answer."

"Did I not stay in the cabin last night until after six bells?"

"You did."

"That proves Brewster a liar. How many minutes did you leave me alone?"

"Perhaps five."

"That's enough. Can I question you, Mr. Gaunt?"

"Yes."

"What time did you retire last night?"

"About nine o'clock."

"Ah!" ejaculated Jack, with exultant tone. "It was no earlier?"

"I think not?"

"Nobody could have entered your room previous to that time without your knowing it?"

"No."

"Thank you, that will do. You see," he continued, addressing the captain, "Mr. Gaunt did not even retire until two bells after the late dog-watch. That proves Scott a liar. Snowball!"

"Yes, sah," replied that sable individual, and he advanced to the front.

The testimony elicited was that he was asleep on the cabin lounge, when a footstep woke him up. He saw a figure in the center of the cabin, which finally opened Gaunt's door and passed inside, re-appearing a few minutes afterward, and then disappearing through the door of Scott's room.

The effect of Snowball's testimony was very apparent.

Patsy Hogan was called, and testified to having seen Scott pass something to Brewster early in the morning, and heard Starboard Jack's name mentioned.

George Long next appeared, and stated that, having been informed by Patsy of what he had seen, he had watched Brewster. Seeing him descend to the fore-castle he followed, being borne company by William Wallace.

He had seen Brewster open Jack's chest and put something in it.

William Wallace corroborated his testimony in every particular, thus sweeping utterly away the foul charge which had been suspended over Jack's head, and placing it on the shoulders of Scott and Brewster.

Just here the missionary, who had been counting the contents of the purse, signified that two five-dollar gold pieces were missing, and in giving a description of them, stated that each of them had a small hole in it, they having once been used as ornaments.

Scott's guilt was already clearly proven, and when Jack suggested that he be searched, it was acted upon, and in one of his pockets were found the two missing pieces of gold.

The evidence was damning.

There could be no further doubt of both his and Brewster's guilt, and it required but a few minutes for the jury to bring in a verdict to that effect.

Captain Stafford, indignant that such a thing could have been attempted by one of his officers, in passing judgment degraded him from his rank, and sentenced him to a month's confinement in the "Nursery, crib 6," and sent Brewster to the same place, "crib 5," and for the same length of time. Bob Simmons, the student who had backed Brewster's statements, was much younger than either of the others, and the captain proved to be more lenient in his case, and gave him but three weeks in which to ponder over the result of his misdeeds.

For some moments after the sentences of the conspirators had been announced, utter silence reigned.

Then Captain Stafford advanced, and extending his hand to Jack, said:

"Starboard, excuse me that I even for one moment doubted your innocence of the foul charge trumped up against you, and believe me, I will endeavor to atone for the same by doing all I can for you in future."

"Thank you—you are very kind," replied Jack, in a voice which showed that within his devil-may-care breast there existed a heart which could be touched by kind words.

"You may go now," and as Captain Stafford spoke he moved away.

Starboard would have made his way to the fore-castle, but he found his way impeded by the excited crowd of students, who came rushing forward, eager to press his hand.

Long had obtained a position near Jack, divining the whole of the scene, and now, with a heart bounding and joyous at his friend's vindication, he cried in happy tones:

"Order—listen."

"Order—order," the cry was repeated, and finally silence was obtained.

"Messmates," began Long, "I ain't much at making a speech, but I want to say that I am glad to see Starboard Jack once more in a clear sea, after a tempest of suspicion such as he has passed through, and propose three cheers for him—hip—hip—hip."

The burden of the cheer was taken up and to it a tiger was added.

Then came the congratulations from one and all.

Even the two professors advanced and signified their satisfaction at the turn events had taken.

The only drawback was when Mr. Gaunt gained his attention during the time off duty that afternoon, and began pouring a religious exhortation into his ear.

After answering many questions, Jack squelched the missionary, when he asked what religion was, by replying:

"Insurance against fire in the next world."

With a funereal groan and a dismal shaking of his head, Mr. Gaunt folded his hands in becoming style, meekly across his breast, and left Jack in possession of the field.

"Whoop-la!" breathed he to himself. "Mr. Gaunt, you're a very nice sort of a person, but I don't want you to bother yourself about me."

"What's the row?" asked Long, approaching.

"Nothing, except that Gaunt has walked away on his dignity at an answer I gave him. Whoop-la! Long, do what they will, Starboard Jack comes out uppermost, don't he?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ELECTION—A BLANK BALLOT—JACK IS ELECTED—AT SIERRA LEONE—MR. GAUNT'S FAREWELL—SAMBO—NIPSHUCK—AT THE FESTIVAL—SKINNY—A FREE RIDE—"HELP ME!"—STARBOARD IN A PREDICAMENT—THE SNAKES.

SCOTT, being degraded from his position, left a vacancy, and the next day, Meigs, who was well worthy of the advancement, was promoted to the second officership. This left the third lieutenantancy vacant, which, by Captain Stafford's orders, was to be filled from among the students who stood highest in their studies and seamanship, and the lucky man was to be elected by ballot.

An examination of the class-roll showed that but four persons eligible to the position, and among them, Starboard Jack.

That afternoon all the students were congregated about the mainmast and Captain Stafford addressed them in these words:

"Gentlemen, owing to circumstances with which you are all acquainted, we are to elect this afternoon a third lieutenant.

"There are but four persons who can compete for the position. They are, Starboard Jack, George Long, James Duncan, and Arthur Cropsey. The election will be—as we have always elected officers heretofore—by ballot. I appoint George Smith, Charles Dixon, and Everet Hawley, tellers. Now, gentlemen, prepare your votes."

Each of the candidates had his own particular friends, who did all in their power to elect their favorite.

Long, who well knew his own weakness, withdrew from the contest, and threw the weight of his influence for Starboard Jack.

The race for the office now lay between the three.

Ballots were prepared, the tellers passed around their hats, and then withdrew a short distance for the purpose of counting the votes cast.

The excitement as the counting neared completion, ran high, and many a heart almost stopped beating as its owner's anxiety as to the result overcame all other feelings.

The report was:

Starboard Jack, fifty-one.

James Duncan, thirty-seven.

Arthur Cropsey, thirty-three.

A majority of all the votes cast being necessary for election, the ballot was a blank, and, under the rules, the candidate receiving the least number of votes was compelled to withdraw, which left Starboard Jack and James Duncan to contest for the position.

Jack's friends, as did Duncan's, worked hard for their respective champion, but Jack, who had steadily grown in favor since his advent on board the ship, carried off the palm by a vote of sixty-one against Duncan's sixty.

"Allow me to congratulate you, Starboard," said Captain Stafford, ere the cheer which greeted the result had died away. "You can remove your effects to the cabin as soon as you please."

"Aye—aye, sir," replied Jack, with a glow of pride in his voice, at the same time respectfully touching his cap.

Jack wore the honors of his new position with an easy grace that confirmed his old, and made him many new friends.

A few days later, and Sierra Leone was in sight.

They dropped anchor in the harbor in the afternoon, and early the next morning Mr. Gaunt bade a farewell to all on board, and was carried ashore in the long boat under charge of Lieutenant Starboard Jack.

While on shore Jack noticed what he thought was a more than ordinary bustle and activity for a town of the size of Sierra Leone, and inquired of a huge negro whom he met whether anything was the matter.

The town is peopled to a great extent by negroes, who once had been slaves in the Southern States, and as Jack was aware of this fact, he was not much surprised to hear the reply, in broken English, of—

"Yes, dar is sumfin de matter, massa."

"What is it?" inquired Jack, further.

"The feast of Nipshuck."

"Who is Nipshuck?"

"One ob de saints."

"What do they do at the feast, as you call it?" asked Jack, "and where is it going to be?"

"About foah miles in de country, on de hills; an' dey sing an' dance, an' kick up dere heels like young catawaupuses. Ki, yi, massa, but dey hab a jolly time, and no mistake;" and the negro laughed gleefully, at recollections of previous jolly times in celebrating Nipshuck's anniversaries.

"Would you like to go, Long?" asked Jack, turning to his chum, who stood at his elbow.

"First-rate."

"Shall we go?"

"Yes."

"Say, Sambo, do you see this?" and Jack held up a piece of silver between his thumb and forefinger.

"Yah," replied the darkey, grinning broadly.

"Well, if you'll take us along to see this show of young 'catawaupuses,' I'll give you this now, and more afterwards. Will you do it?"

"Ki—yi—hi. I guess I will, massa. Gib it to me," and he stretched out his hand for the coin.

"You will meet us here by this house about dark, will you?"

"Suah—without fail," and seizing the piece of money he darted away, and no doubt it was soon exchanged for that bane of the negro race—bad liquor.

Starboard asked and obtained permission for himself and Long to go ashore, and just before dark the dingy was lowered, and they started shorewards.

True to his promise, Sambo met them at the appointed place, and they then set out on a four mile walk to the place where the festival was to be held.

As they approached the spot, a queer, ghostly scene met their view.

On a plateau, which was fringed on three sides by a stunted growth of trees and brush, they saw blazing here and there, brush fires, while a most discordant sound arose on the air as the tong-bongs, a sort of rude drum, were fiercely beaten by the natives, while whirling about, yelling, laughing and screeching, forming all sorts of grotesque figures, were the dancers.

"Dar we am, massa," exclaimed Sambo, as they entered within the mystic circle, and after Jack had almost been carried from his feet as a great fat wench struck him in galloping by.

Jack and Long stood still, interested spectators of the unique scene before them.

At length Jack saw flit past a young and handsome looking negro girl, whose complexion was nearer white than black.

"Nice," mumbled Jack. "Nice girl; wonder if she'll come this way again."

As he spoke she flitted past again, as airily, and gracefully as a ball-room belle; more graceful, perhaps, as there was no train to hold or impede her movements.

A narrow strip of cloth around her loins, and a short skirt reaching barely to the knees, was the costume she wore.

"Long, she's a beauty," he said, enthusiastically.

"Jack—Jack," said Long, in a mock serious tone, "beware—don't fall in love with a girl of her complexion."

"Don't you worry—hey!" this last was a bawl at the girl as she whirled past again.

She did not stop, and Jack darted off in pursuit, leaving Long and Sambo to keep each other company.

At last he captured her, and one look into her really handsome face overcame all scruples as to color, and he pressed a kiss on her lips.

She appeared to be a willing captive, and with one arm about her waist he walked with her in the direction of the spot where he had left his chum.

He spoke to her, but although she understood a little English, she could not answer him.

"I love you," said Jack, and he repeated the words again and again, accompanying the assertion each time with a hug which was intended to emphasize his words.

"What is your name?" asked Jack.

She understood the question, and the reply was something that sounded like "Skinny."

"A fearful name for such a lovely creature. Whoop-la! my darling, but you're a stunner."

After telling Long to enjoy himself as best he could, Jack drew his prize a little to one side, and began pouring sweet but meaningless words into the girl's ears.

He was in the middle of a prolonged squeeze when a grunt caused him to look around, and he saw outlined between himself and the fire, a great large negro wench, who, after giving the girl a cuff or two, seized Jack about the waist, slung him across her shoulder, and walked off.

For an instant he was too much surprised to think of resistance, and then, using some naughty words, we fear, he began kicking and struggling; but wrench and twist as he would, he could not get loose.

The wench strode straight on towards the center of the plateau, the fumes of the alcoholic beverage she had been imbibing floating up into Jack's face.

"Let me down," yelled Jack.

The only reply was a grunt.

He wrenched around, but she held him as in a vise, and as they passed, the dancers all stopped—the tong-bong beaters ceased operations, and "Ki—ki—yi—yi—hi—hi—" Jack heard on every side of him.

Not a very elegant position, surely, for Starboard Jack, an officer of the *Mercury*, too, this involuntary riding of the shoulders of a stalwart negro wench.

"Let go—blast you," screamed Jack, for the first time since our acquaintance with him exhibiting anger. "Let me down, I say!" and he gave her a hearty kick in the ear, which she retaliated by slamming him heavily on the ground, picking him up again, and pursuing her way.

Jack did not kick again.

"Hello, Long!" at last cried Jack, willing to acknowledge himself beaten. "Help me."

Long was close at hand, and when he arrived and saw our hero in his predicament, he just lay down on the ground, and holding his sides, rolled around convulsed with laughter.

"Hang it, Long, why don't you help me!" bellowed Jack.

Before Long could answer, the wench stopped, and bending forward, held Jack just out of reach of the flames of one of the fires.

"Help," groaned Jack.

"Sambo, hearing the noise, and being attracted by it, now came up, and after some words in a guttural tone of voice with the wench, she allowed Jack to stand on his feet, but kept hold of his shoulder.

Sambo then explained the matter, telling Starboard that according to their customs, the advances he had made to Skinny put him under obligations to espouse her.

"What!" exclaimed Jack. "Marry a wench? Not I by a ——— sight!"

"Can't help it, massa, it's your own fault," replied Sambo. "I can't help you—you's got to marry de girl."

"Never!"

"Better do it," said Sambo.

"Why so?"

"Bekase de girl's friends might make it bad for you; dey is bad fellers."

"Here's a pretty pickle," said Jack, savagely, as glancing around he saw threatening faces gathering about him.

Long laughed at Jack's lugubrious tones.

"You needn't laugh," said Jack, sharply. "Just suppose that you had to marry a wench."

This was too much for Long, and he exploded again.

Jack was now fairly enraged, and he broke loose and attempted to run, but he was brought to a sudden stop, and given to understand that he must marry the girl or die.

For once the valiant Starboard was nonplussed—was vanquished.

After a moment's thought as to the seriousness of the affair, Long communicated with Sambo, and matters were finally brought to an amicable settlement, by the presentation to the old wench of a bottle of brandy, which soon disappeared down her capacious throat.

Jack was sullen for a little while, but as the sense of the ludicrousness of the affair struck him he enjoyed a hearty laugh, and became good humored again.

"I'll fix 'em, cuss 'em," he said, emphatically, late in the evening, and taking from his pocket a package of fireworks, such as we call snakes, he arranged them, and then going to about the center of the plateau, he lighted them!

A succession of horrified yells as the fiery, hissing things dashed among them, arose from all; each sought safety in flight.

This but made matters worse, for the snakes following in their wake, burned their bare legs and thus increased their terror.

And he had revenge on the wench who had used him so roughly, for she rushed headlong into a miry spot from which she was unable to extricate herself, and where she could see Jack, who had caught Skinny as she was flying in terror, take the same liberties with her daughter as he had taken before.

She yelled and screamed for her kinsmen, but to no purpose; they had vanished.

Long reminded him that it was time to be off, so with one parting hug

and a kiss, Jack left Skinny to assist her mother, and together the two chums retraced their steps, and several hours later, the two weary boys were on board the *Mercury* again.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN EPISODE ON SHORE—ANOTHER OF NEARLY THE SAME CHARACTER—HOMEWARD BOUND—MR. AND MRS. SEWALL—SCOTT AND BREWSTER—A MUTINY—THE MUTINEERS TRIUMPHANT—KEPT PRISONERS—THE BATTERING-RAM—A FIGHT FOR SUPREMACY.

THE next day, the two chums went ashore together, and while roaming through the streets, a low-browed, evil-looking negro approached, and grasping hold of Starboard's collar, suddenly gave him a violent shake, and roughly asked:

"Am you de fellow as was at Nipshuck last night?"

As the negro shook Jack, it roused all the anger of his being, and he coolly and sternly replied:

"Yes," and as he drew his pistol and aimed at the man's head, he demanded—"Why?"

When the negro saw the pistol and its dangerous proximity to himself, his valor vanished, and leaving go his hold of Starboard's collar, he abjectly said:

"Scuse me, massa; but I done gone and made a mistake."

"Down on your knees and ask pardon," sternly said Jack; and trembling in every joint, the negro obeyed, and begged piteously for pardon.

"Whoop-la! now go!" said Jack, as the negro arose to his feet, and that person lost no time in putting his carcass out of the way of a bullet from the pistol which Jack still held in his hand.

The story of their being at the festival was known all over Sierra Leone, it being related in conjunction with the account of an awful visitation of some supernatural being who let loose snakes of fire.

They wandered into a saloon, which they had hardly entered, when a rough and scaly white man appeared, and commenced making remarks reflecting on our two boys.

"Now you just see here," at last said Starboard, out of patience, "you just see here, you big, overgrown, oakum-headed galoot."

"What's that you're callin' me?" demanded the scaly individual in a rage, springing to his feet and drawing from his waist a formidable looking knife.

"I called you an oakum-headed galoot," repeated Jack, drawing his pistol, cocking it, and laying it in front of him on the table. "And if you don't put that knife away I'll make a leak in your carcass that can't be plugged up."

As the knife was returned to its sheath, Jack said:

"I want nothing whatever to do with you, and you may as well go."

With muttered curses, the man walked away, vowing vengeance on Jack and his chum.

"Whoop-la, Long, but we're in a queer country, I'm thinking," said Jack, as the man disappeared from sight.

"I'm of the same opinion."

That afternoon Captain Stafford informed Jack that he intended leaving Sierra Leone next day, bound on the homeward voyage.

In accordance with this information, the *Mercury's* anchor was weighed and catted; her sails were spread to the breeze, and she skimmed away toward old ocean beyond as lightly as a swallow.

They stopped at Santa Cruz, and received an addition to their number in the persons of Mr. and Miss Sewall, who wished to return to New York.

A few days after leaving the latter place, Scott's and Brewster's term of imprisonment expired, and with crestfallen faces they took their places among the crew.

When they learned that they were homeward bound they both felt sorry, for neither wished to see or be seen by their friends, when the black report of their conduct was made known.

Scott put his wits to work, took Brewster into his confidence, and between them they hatched up a plan to mutiny, provided they could secure enough to join with them, seize the ship and run her to suit themselves.

Duncan, Jack's opponent for the lieutenantcy, felt sore over his defeat, and when the subject was broached by Scott, he felt inclined to join him.

Scott was shrewd enough to see how the land lay, and carefully manipulating his feelings, at last had him fully enter into the plot.

Duncan's friends, those who had voted for him, moved by his example, for the most part committed themselves to the plot, and with the other disaffected students, the conspirators rolled up the number of sixty-five, about one half of all on board.

Starboard had noticed an alteration in the manner of most of the students toward Scott, and pondered over the fact, seeking its solution.

A chance remark which he overheard one day gave him an inkling of the matter, and he determined to be on the lookout.

It was a dark, stormy night, and Jack stood by the wheelman's side. While he stood there eight bells, midnight, struck.

In the forecabin a queer scene was transpiring.

As the starboard watch turned out to go on deck, certain exclamations told that more than one person's clothing was missing.

Scott had worked it in this wise.

Those of the larboard watch friendly to the conspirators were to remain on deck, and allow the others to go below. Those of the starboard watch, friendly to the captain, found their clothes missing, and were thus compelled to stay below.

By this means the conspirators had the deck almost wholly to themselves.

But a few minutes after the eight bells struck, Jack heard a low cry of "down with the hatches, boys—batten them down!"

Misgivings as to the real state of affairs rushed upon his mind, which were verified, as Scott, followed by a half dozen adherents, came rushing aft.

"Surrender—you," he cried, springing in front of Jack, and presenting a pistol.

"Never," cried Jack, "Whoop-la! Get out of my way!" and dashing the pistol aside with his left hand, with his right he dealt Scott a blow which caused him to measure his length on the deck. Before Scott could

regain his feet, he had dashed through the crowd who had accompanied him, and bounded toward the forecabin, around the entrance to which a crowd was gathered.

He had cleared a passage to the hatchway. Stooping he undid the fastenings of one batten. Ere he could loosen another, he was struck across the head with a belaying pin and rendered senseless.

When he recovered his senses and opened his eyes, it was to see bending over him, with her face close to his, Miss Sewall.

His head pained him. His thoughts were confused. He raised his hand to his head, and as he pressed it, recollections of the state of affairs rushed upon him. With one bound he was in the center of the cabin, crying:

"A mutiny—a mutiny—whoop-la! Starboard Jack to the rescue!" and before a hand could be interposed, he dashed up the cabin stairway and threw himself against the door, but to no purpose, as it was securely fastened.

Returning, a council of war was held.

Captain Stafford was astounded at the shape things had taken, and humbly listened to all that was or could be said to remedy the evil.

At any rate the students friendly to the captain had the whole range of 'tween decks, and after a general discussion it was resolved to make a sortie and try to break the cabin door.

It was ineffectual.

For two whole days they had been prisoners.

Meanwhile Jack, whose head, thanks to the kind ministrations of Miss Sewall, began to feel better, in rummaging about, stumbled across an extra spar, or jury mast.

"Eureka! Whoop-la! just the thing," he exclaimed, excitedly.

He had it brought up from the hold, and into the cabin.

He stationed himself at the head of the cabin stairs with Long close behind him, and then, by his orders, the spar was picked up, and the students walked back with it.

"Be ready to get on deck. Keep your weapons handy. Now—one—two—three!"

As the last was uttered there was a crash, the cabin doors gave way, and headed by Jack, the loyal students poured on deck.

"To the wheel, Long," called Jack.

"Aye—aye," replied that individual, and ere the astonished wheelman had time to comprehend the state of affairs Long had sent him to grass.

Scott, who was in the waist when the crash occurred, came bounding aft. As he saw Jack a curse escaped his lips, and, drawing his pistol, he fired at our hero.

"Whoop-la! my beauty," said Starboard, in an ironical, yet elated tone of voice, "try again, better luck next time."

Scott did try again, but with no better success. To prevent a repetition Jack fired at Scott.

There was a yell of agony and Scott's arm dropped to his side, useless, shattered.

"Whoop-la! now my hearties—whoop-la! charge."

The opposing factions met.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VICTORY FOR STARBOARD—OFF FOR NEW YORK—A PEEP INTO STARBOARD'S PREVIOUS LIFE—"YOU MUST BE MY NEPHEW"—THE RELATIONSHIP PROVED—A COUSINLY KISS—CAPTAIN STAFFORD TAKES THE SAME PRIVILEGE—AN ECLIPSE—"YOU ARE ALL BLOCKHEADS"—CLIPS AND ECLIPSE.

"WHOOP-LA—whoop-la!" was Starboard Jack's battle cry, as he rushed toward the spot where the mutineers were drawn up in line to receive them.

"Sail in, boys," cried Jack, "whoop-la! Brewster, that's for you," and Starboard, who had selected Brewster for an antagonist, bounded forward, and with his clenched fist tumbled him over.

Scott, although his arm being shattered caused him much pain, realized that his cause was a desperate one, and came rushing forward, and by his cries encouraged the mutineers.

They fought nobly and well, but they could not contend with such impetuosity as Starboard developed, and were finally obliged to cry for quarter.

They were penned in one corner, from which they were taken one by one below decks and shut up in the "nursery," which soon was filled to overflowing.

The ship was again in command of Captain Stafford, who lost no time in publicly thanking Starboard for the same.

The ship's course was changed, and again she stood in the direction of the far-away New York.

One moonlight evening, when distant from New York but four days' sail, Jack, Mr. and Miss Sewall and Captain Stafford were seated on deck. Mr. Sewall and the captain conversed together, while Jack played the agreeable to the young lady.

At length she said:

"I pray you, Mr. Starboard, do not think me inquisitive, but you resemble an aunt of mine so much, that it makes me curious in regard to your previous life."

"First, please don't call me Mr. Starboard," replied Jack. "Second, if you would like to know my humble history, it is at your service."

"I should like to hear it," she replied, her interest in the same evinced by her earnest tones.

Then Jack commenced his story.

As he reached the part, as it had been told him, of the wrecking of the good ship *Helen*, and of his escape from death, an ejaculation of—

"My God! Starboard—you are—you must be—my nephew."

"Your nephew!" said Starboard, in astonished, inquiring tones.

"Yes."

"How do you make that out?" asked Jack, incredulously.

"I'll tell you. My sister is your mother; she married James Sinclair, your father. When you were but a couple of months old, business called Sinclair to Europe, and his wife accompanied him. They returned in the *Helen*, which, as you know, was wrecked. My sister was among the saved, but the horror of the scene crazed her, and she is at the present time an inmate of—asylum. Your father was drowned. Ofttimes in her ravings have I heard my sister describe with graphic power the terrible scene, and repeat the conversation between her dear husband and

herself, which speaks of your having been lashed to a board. After I first saw you I mentioned the fact of your remarkable resemblance to her who is your mother, to my daughter; have I not, Elsie?" and he turned to the fair girl.

"Yes," was the soft reply.

"Are you satisfied?" inquired Mr. Sewall.

"If you are."

"And I am, as a cousin," interposed Elsie.

"Thank you, both, very kindly," responded Jack, with a queer choking sensation in his throat. "Uncle, I greet you," and he grasped the hand which Mr. Sewall proffered. He ignored the hand which Elsie offered, but bending, he pressed his lips to her fair brow, whispering, "we are cousins, you know."

Starboard Jack found it no easy task to get to sleep that night, so excited was he at the unexpected events just described.

That he, who had thought himself without relatives or friends, to be discovered as he had been, seemed almost miraculous.

In continuance of the subject the next day, Mr. Sewall informed him that his father had left considerable property, of which he was the custodian, and which he would invest him with the title of when he became of age.

They arrived in New York.

Jack, or as we should more properly call him now, Everett Sinclair, having enlisted in the service in an irregular manner, was so situated that he could resign, which he immediately did, being advised to pursue this course by Captain Stafford, as well as his uncle.

It was the last night which Jack would spend on board.

His uncle and cousin had already gone ashore, and were stopping for a few days at the Hotel, until their own residence could be put in order.

"Let me see," said our hero, reflectively; "after to-night, Starboard Jack becomes of the past. Now, what can I do to hoax the boys so bad that Starboard Jack will live in their memories?"

He was in the cabin, sitting by a side table, his head held by his hand. Before him was a pile of books and papers, which he began listlessly fumbling with.

An almanac struck his eye.

He picked it up, and carelessly turned its leaves over.

An item caught his eye, and he exclaimed:

"Why, how can that be? An eclipse to-night. I was not aware of it. Ah!" he said, as, on closing the book, he saw an inscription on its cover, "I'll fool the boys," and placing the almanac in his pocket he went on deck, and when near enough to the group gathered in the waist, he said:

"Well, gentlemen, I suppose you are all waiting to see the eclipse?"

"What eclipse?" asked Long.

"Why, of the moon, of course," answered Jack.

"You're gassing, Jack."

"Not a bit of it," said Jack, earnestly.

"Say, Starboard," called some one in the outer edge of the group.

"Well."

"What are you giving us—taffy?"

"Yes, with a string fastened to it," somebody else replied.

"No, I'm not," retorted Jack.

"What is it you're giving us, then?"

"Rock candy," replied Jack. "Seeing's believing, so look for yourself," and drawing the almanac from his pocket, he opened it and passed it to one of the doubters, who happened to be smoking a pipe, and knocked the dead ashes out of it, and then threw its glow on the page.

"It's a fact, boys," he said. "There is an eclipse to-night."

"Let me see."

"And me."

"And me."

These requests were complied with, and these cavilers were satisfied.

"I'm going in the top to see it," said Jack, when all doubts were set at rest. "Who's going along?"

The response was a chorus of "I's," and the shrouds for a few minutes were fairly alive with the boys as they made their way into the top.

After a few minutes among them, Jack slyly slipped away and descended to the deck, where, while indulging in a hearty laugh, an occasional exultant, "Whoop-la! well done, Starboard Jack," issued from his lips.

Standing on deck was a large tank, which had been hoisted from the hold during the afternoon, and which was partially filled with water.

Being on rollers, Jack found it an easy task in rolling it to the foot of the larboard shrouds, the incline of the deck being sufficient motive power in itself.

Then he took a cigar and sat down to await developments.

He smoked it up and lighted another.

Meanwhile the boys in the top waited patiently for the moon to appear.

The ridiculousness of the affair never for a moment struck them. They could not see through the thing; but when, after two hours patient waiting the moon arose clear and bright, they made up their minds that they had been hoaxed.

Jack at the same time ascended the shrouds, and called out.

"Well, how about the eclipse?"

"It's a blasted hoax," growled one.

"A mean sell, to make us stay up here two hours."

"It's no sell," said he, who had first looked at the almanac. "The almanac said there was going to be an eclipse."

"Whoop-la!" cried Jack. "Gentlemen, you are all blockheads. In the first place if there was an eclipse, you couldn't see it; in the second, the almanac is six years old;" and with a mocking, taunting laugh, he made his way rapidly to the deck.

"Just like you, cuss you," growled one of the boys. "Always doing something like this."

"You think you're smart, don't you. Thunder and lightning, but I'd like to see somebody get the best of you."

"Whoop-la! I don't doubt it."

The starboard shrouds were in poor condition, and the boys all came down by the larboard side.

The tub or tank stood in the shade of the gunwale, and as the boys rushed down pell-mell, they failed to see it, and splash—splash—splash—followed in rapid succession as they fell in the water one after another.

There was just water enough to drench them to the skin, without put-

ting them in any danger of drowning. When about a dozen or fifteen were in the tank, Jack went to its side, and gave it a push which tilted it, and having arranged it for that purpose, at another push, it turned completely over, thus covering and imprisoning its inmates, from which an unearthly yell was heard.

Then came screeches, curses and screams, as the boys got into a free fight. The quarters were so confined as to give them scarcely standing-room, and each crowding the other enraged them all, and a chorus of dismal wails was heard.

The din was infernal. It cannot be described.

"Whoop-la! boys, lend a hand," cried Starboard, wishing to divert suspicion from himself; and as he spoke, he advanced and laid his hands on the tank. The others assisted, and the tank was raised, when out rushed the angry, bruised boys, cursing roundly.

The moonlight, as they stepped into it, disclosed a scene of havoc. Noses, ears, faces, were scratched or bitten, and covered with blood. Clothes were torn into shreds, and in some cases were entirely missing.

The feeling of anger towards Starboard ran high; but although they knew he had hoaxed them, they had but suspicions, without any proof that he had been the cause of this disaster.

Jack consoled with the unfortunate persons, assuming that it was an unlucky accident, and so well did he feign to believe what he said, that most of their suspicions were removed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT THE ASYLUM—MRS. SINCLAIR'S RECOVERY—SHE RECOGNIZES HER BROTHER—HER AGITATION—"HE IS—MY—BOY." "I AM"—THE SCENE OF THE WRECK.

THE next morning, according to agreement, he met his uncle and cousin, and together they started for the asylum of which his mother was an inmate, which was reached in a few hours after starting.

Starboard—or more properly, Everett—and Elsie, remained in the waiting-room, while Mr. Sewall went into the private office of the superintendent of the asylum.

Let us accompany him.

The superintendent, a kindly-looking, grey-haired man—Doctor Singer by name—still holds in his hand the card which Mr. Sewall had sent in, as he entered the room.

Rising and coming forward, the doctor said:

"Ah, Mr. Sewall, I'm very glad to see you."

"And I you—my sister?"

"Is better, I am very happy to say; in fact, is completely cured."

"Do you mean it?" gasped Mr. Sewall.

"I do."

"Heaven be praised!"

"Amen."

"How long has she been in her right mind?"

"Six months or more. She had been growing rational for a long while previous, and we finally reached the conclusion that she was perfectly sane. The sum of money you left with me I placed at her disposal; but she preferred remaining here in the light of a guest. Shall I send for her?"

"Yes—yes," excitedly said Mr. Sewall. "Send her to the waiting-room; I have others with me."

"Very well."

Mr. Sewall returned to the room where he had left Everett and Elsie, and commenced restlessly pacing the floor.

Instead of sending, Doctor Singer himself went and informed Mrs. Sinclair that there was company to see her.

"To see me?" asked a delicate, slightly-built woman, who had been busy with her needle when he entered the room.

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Come down-stairs and we'll see," he kindly replied, and he led her to the door of the waiting-room, and throwing it open, gently pushed her into the room.

As the door opened, Mr. Sewall, whose back had been toward it, quickly turned and faced his sister.

She gazed fixedly at him, and then pressed her hand to her forehead, as if endeavoring to recall the past.

"Long—long years had passed since she had gazed on the face before her with sane eyes, and it seemed strange, although familiar.

"My brother!"

"My sister!"

They were locked in each other's arms.

Doctor Singer, who had remained thus far, withdrew, and left the little party to themselves.

"Thank God, you know me once more!" said Mr. Sewall, gazing fondly into his sister's face.

"Yes," she gravely replied, it seems all like a dream. When I last remember you, you were so much younger; but, brother, who are these?" and she indicated Elsie and Everett.

"This is my daughter, Elsie; she was born while you were in Europe. you know."

"Yes, I remember; and him?" she said, pointing at Everett, and gazing with gradually dilating eyes at him.

Her breath came short and quick as she thought she traced lineaments of her dead husband's face in that of the boy.

She clasped her hand to her heart, and hung her head with suspense to hear the words fall from her brother's lips.

Everett's heart had jumped to his throat as he saw his mother enter the room.

She was his mother.

He felt—knew it.

At her ardent agitation he took a step towards her.

"Oh, brother, do, oh, do not keep me in suspense longer! can it be—can it be? Quick—quick, is he your son?"

"No."

"Can it"—and then a gloom settled over her features, and she said: "No, it cannot be; my babe must have perished."

"He—did—not," gasped Everett, in a shaking voice, his eyes suffused with tears.

"Sister, do you not recognize him?"

"He is—he is—my—boy!"

"I am," and Everett's voice trembled.

"He is," said Mr. Sewall.

"My son!"

"My mother!"

There was a simultaneous advancing, and mother and son were locked in close embrace.

Let us leave the scene.

It would be profane to intrude further.

Mrs. Sinclair, who had preferred remaining within the asylum walls, now that she had something to live for was only too eager to leave them.

Her mother heart needed no corroboration of Everett's story to prove him her son, but, as he wished it, the next day a party was formed, and the scene of the wreck of the *Helen* was visited, and more than one rough but honest fisherman was found who correctly remembered every circumstance connected with the finding of the babe, and a totally unexpected piece of evidence was the bringing forth by Spud, Mike Mulligan's closest friend of former days, of an article of baby's clothing, marked with the initials E. S.

Several hours were spent in Spud's hut, and Mrs. Sinclair listened with ill-repressed delight, as she heard the fisherman call to Jack's mind some of the boyish pranks he had played in by-gone days.

Leaving the rest of the company with Spud, Everett made his way to the graveyard where Daddy Mike and his wife lay sleeping. He had expected to see the grave overgrown with weeds and neglected, but in this he was mistaken, for it evidently was cared for.

But by whom?

Everett could easily guess.

It was good, honest old Spud.

Before leaving, Everett pressed into his hand a nice sum of money. Spud resisted taking it, until Everett whispered, "for Daddy Mike's sake, take it."

"You have not forgotten Mike, I see," said Spud, with a full voice.

"No, nor have you."

"How know ye that?"

"I have been at the graveyard."

Soon after they were on their way back to the city.

The days flew swiftly by, and Everett was beginning to prepare for college.

Captain Stafford had dined with them a number of times, and one day

at dinner he invited them all to come on board two days later, as they were to leave port the next morning succeeding.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

GATHERED about the mainmast of the *Mercury*, Everett sees, from his slightly elevated position, all the old, familiar faces, and scattered among them many new ones.

The sun is just sinking, and it is time for the party to return ashore.

He attempted to go, but is held back while a murmur runs from mouth to mouth. It grows louder and louder until it resolves itself into an uproarious shout of "a speech—a speech."

He would have excused himself, but that cry still rang out, "a speech—a speech."

"Order—order," was bandied about, until silence was heard.

"Really, messmates, friends, companions, in many a time of pleasure—in many a time of peril, the task you set before me is too great. Speech-making is not in my line. We are to part to-day, perhaps never to meet again. I am sorry to leave you, who have proved yourselves such friends to me, despite all that I did to gain your enmity. If I have played any joke on you, it was only in a spirit of pure fun, and I now ask the pardon of each and every one of you. You are to leave for another cruise to-morrow morning, and I sincerely hope you will sometimes bear Starboard Jack in mind. Time may roll on, but it cannot obliterate the pleasant remembrances of the happy days I have spent on the *Mercury*; and whatever may be the future, gentlemen, to you, my messmates and friends, I shall always remain Starboard Jack."

As he finished, three rousing cheers were given in his honor.

He shook hands all around, remembering Meigs and Long, who was now third lieutenant, in a more substantial manner, having presented each with a gold chain, inscribed on which were these words:

"From Starboard Jack."

Very proud indeed felt Mrs. Sinclair of her son, as she saw the regard which his old friends exhibited for him.

They are ashore.

The long boat which, under charge of Lieutenant Long, had conveyed them on shore, is now returning to the *Mercury*, bearing with it a last farewell from Starboard Jack to those on board.

Several days later he entered college.

His name now is Everett Sinclair.

And so it is, in changing his name, we must bid "good-by" to STARBOARD JACK.

[THE END.]

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